SIGNIFICANT FACTORS RELATING TO ESL CLASSES IN THREE LEVI STRAUSS PLANTS

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective

The objective of this study is to identify and analyse significant factors relating to the English as a second language (ESL) program of classes at three Levi Strauss plants in Brantford, Stoney Creek, and Edmonton. The focus was on three kinds of factors: (a) those relating to workers' choices about taking part in the program; (b) those relating to the impact of the classes on participants; and (c) those relating to the impact of the classes on other stakeholders in the plants.

Personnel and Methods

The study was carried out by a faculty member and two research officers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) from January to June 1990. Data were collected during eleven person/days each at the Stoney Creek and Brantford plants and during five person/days at the Edmonton plant. Data were collected from senior management, human resources personnel, plant nurses, ESL teachers and administrators, supervisors, instructors, and non-salaried workers who were, had been, or never had been in the ESL classes. Data collection methods included individual and group interviews, participant observation, and review of documents. Analysis of the data was cross-checked among the three researchers and with a number of company employees.

Findings

The ESL classes at all three plants were described in enthusiastic terms by the participants. The main suggestion for improvements made by some participants in each plant was that more reading and writing be taught. Participation rates of non-Canadian born employees in the three plants was approximately 18 per cent at Stoney Creek, 8 per cent at Brantford, and 29 per cent at Edmonton. Access to the classes is controlled by human resources personnel and supervisors at Stoney Creek, by supervisors at Brantford, and by human resource personnel and the company that provides the ESL training in Edmonton. Only in Brantford did we find evident restriction of access to the program. Also, in Brantford there is no class offered at times convenient for night shift workers. Otherwise, the scheduling of classes seems to be suitable. At Stoney Creek, students are permitted to enter the class at any time, whereas in the other two plants, classes are arranged into sessions of about four months. With the session arrangements, more structured curriculum can be developed. At Stoney Creek and especially at Edmonton, classes were divided according to the level of English of the students, permitting more focussed teaching. However, at Brantford most of the students were at the beginner level.

Class sizes, while not uniform, were not a major problem, except that special arrangements might be made at Stoney Creek and Brantford for students with low levels of literacy in their first language. Different issues emerged in the three plants regarding how the workers were remunerated for the time they spent studying English. In our view, participants in the classes are making good use of the time.

Suggestions to the Company

We have two main suggestions to the company. One is that the ESL program be moved along from its current pilot stage to a more stable status in the company through the development of policy on the purpose and nature of the content of the classes. Many of the concerns we heard from company employees about the program arose from lack of clarity about its purpose, objectives, content, intended outcomes, role in the company's training program, and so on. Our second suggestion is that there be regular and purposeful contact between the ESL teachers and the supervisors.

We also included a number of ideas relating to the profile of the program in the plants, the qualifications and professional support for the teachers, ways of meeting special needs of learners with low levels of formal education, community services that might be useful to some of the workers, and higher level training for workers who would like to be promoted. We also suggest that an ESL class be established that is accessible for the midnight shift workers at Brantford.

Our Experience in Conducting this Study

We wish to thank the company for involving us in this research. Each of us has gained a great deal personally and professionally from the opportunity to learn about the company, its operations, its programs, and, most of all, its philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

Objective of the Study

As outlined in the proposal for this study, the objective of the study is to identify and analyse significant factors relating to the English as a second language (ESL) program of classes at three Levi Strauss & Co. (Canada) Inc. plants in Brantford, Stoney Creek, and Edmonton. The focus is on three kinds of factors: (a) those relating to workers' choices about taking part in the program; (b) those relating to the impact of the classes on participants; and (c) those relating to the impact of the classes on other stakeholders in the plants.

Organization of this Report

In the following parts of the introduction, we will provide some background on this study--its history and personnel. We will describe the first phase of the study in which we negotiated the parameters of the study. We will also outline our approaches to the second phase of the study in which we gathered data from the plants and did the analysis. Finally, in the introduction, we will provide some background on the role of English in the Workplace programs in the Canadian context.

The next three sections contain our reports on the individual plants, Stoney Creek, Brantford, and Edmonton. Each report is organized into a description of the plant (site and operations; workforce; and communication patterns in the plant), the ESL program, employee perceptions of the ESL program (management; supervisors; workers; and ESL teacher(s)), and an analysis of these data.

The final section includes a comparison of issues across the three plants; challenges to creating objectives for ESL and the relation of such objectives to the company's

Mission, Vision, and Values; practical suggestions for the ESL program; and further issues for the company to consider.

Certain documents referred to in the text are put in appendices at the end of the report. The first is the list of questions generated by the plant managers regarding the issues in this study. The second is a collection of materials that represent some of the written materials that workers have to deal with in various aspects of their work.

Background to this Study

In the spring of 1989, a representative of Levi Strauss contacted the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) to identify a researcher who would undertake to assess the ESL program in its three relevant plants. Dr. Barbara Burnaby of the Department of Adult Education agreed to conduct the study as principal investigator. Bronwyn Peirce and Helen Harper, doctoral students in the Department of Curriculum, were hired to work as research officers on the project. We will refer to ourselves in this report as the OISE team. We should note that we were particularly interested in being involved in this work because the research question that was proposed was not only to identify the linguistic outcomes on the ESL program but also the social impact on the participants and other stakeholders. We found this question to be a refreshing and progressive change from the questions usually raised by managements of businesses with regards to the outcomes of training programs in their organizations.

Phase One of the Study

In the late fall of 1989, the OISE team met with several members of the management of Levi Strauss in order to work out the details of the study. The OISE team was, at first, concerned about the scope of the study, since it could potentially involve dozens of important but difficult questions concerning such fields as race relations, oral and written communications in the workplace, labourmarket issues, social issues for immigrants in the community, union/management concerns, and so on. Since our research time on the project was limited, we wanted to be sure that our expectations of the outcomes of the study matched those of the company. We met several times with Julie White and once each with Derek Davidson and Barbara Quinn-Besner. To assist us in focussing our study, the plant managers were asked to develop a list of questions that they would like to have addressed in the study (see Appendix One). The OISE team was then invited to attend a meeting of the plant managers in which the managers discussed the priority they would place on the 33 questions they had raised. Also, on February 16, 1990, the OISE team attended a session given by John DeShano at OISE.

It is common in conducting evaluations or assessments for the researcher to work from a formal set of objectives that management has for the training program. It became clear to us that Levi Strauss did not have a set of objectives as such for its ESL program but was developing the program on an experimental basis. We saw this as a reasonable way to proceed and understood that members of management had positive and flexible expectations of the outcomes. Thus, we approached our study as a task of identifying, describing, and analysing the dynamics of the program as it presently exists rather than one of matching particular outcomes with specific, predetermined objectives.

Phase Two of the Study

It was arranged that the OISE team would spend the equivalent of two working weeks in each of the Stoney Creek and Brantford plants and one week in Edmonton. The two research officers worked in the Stoney Creek plant from February 12 to 23, and in Brantford from February 26 to March 16. The principal investigator spent one day in each of those plants. One of the research officers worked in the Edmonton plant from March 26 to 30. Relative to our plans as outlined in the proposal and discussed with management, the data we collected were limited in three ways. (1) Although we had hoped to link up with the climate survey that Derek Davidson was to conduct, that plan did not work out; so our data are not as extensive as they might have been. (2) We found that we did not have the time to explore the relationship of the ESL program in the plants to organizations in the community or to find workers who had left the plant. (3) We did not have much contact with union leaders in the plants. Otherwise, we were able to collect data in close conformity with our plans as outlined in our proposal. The following are revised lists of our approaches and targets; those proposed that were not used have been removed.

Our data gathering approaches were:

- interviews with human resources personnel and other managerial staff
- interviews with people delivering the ESL classes
- observations of oral and written communication patterns in the workplace
- observations of ESL classes
- review of documents related to the ESL classes
- individual and group interviews with supervisors
- individual and group interviews with workers who have taken ESL classes
- individual and group interviews with eligible workers who have not taken classes

The focus of the data gathering included:

- the history of the ESL program
- stakeholders' views of the program's purpose and effectiveness
- demography of the population in the plant who are eligible for ESL classes

- issues related to communication in the plant
- description of the classes including recruitment, methods, class demography, content, and so on
- impact of the classes on praticipants
- impact of the classes on others in the plant
- impact of the classes on communications and other relations in the plant.

Please see the introductions to each of the reports on the individual plants for a detailed description of the research conducted in that plant.

Some Background on English in the Workplace in the Canadian Context

In order to provide some context for the data and findings of this study, we offer here a brief overview of the history and the role of ESL programs in the workplace in Canada. Although Canada is a country populated mainly by people who are immigrants or the descendents of immigrants, the formal teaching to immigrants of Canada's dominant languages is a relatively recent phenomenon. For most of Canada's history, people who have come to live in English or French areas of the country have learned those languages through 'submersion' or have managed to live here without learning the dominant language at all. For example, many non-English/French speaking immigrants in the late 19th or early 20th Centuries went to farming communities where they could get by with little English or French. Those who went to cities or towns learned the dominant language as best they could. Visible minorities (those few that were permitted into the country before the past few decades) were often ghettoized as to work and place of residence and could manage largely in their own language. There is a strong trend for the children of immigrants to become fluent in the dominant language and often to lose the ability to speak their parents' mother tongue. Whatever language training was available was provided by charitable and non-profit organizations such as churches and Frontier College.

After World War II, Canada received many immigrants; first displaced persons from northern Europe, then economic migrants from southern Europe (largely to central Canada), and finally, as a result of changes in the Immigration Act in the mid 1970s, immigrants and refugees from all over the world. In the 1960s some of the provinces which were receiving many immigrants began to initiate ESL/FSL programs for children in schools and for adults. In 1968, the federal government inaugurated a program of ESL/FSL for adult immigrants destined for the labourforce. Relatively recently there has been a trend to support ESL/FSL programs for adults through community agencies. Today, especially in areas of high immigration there is a great proliferation of official language programs offered by school boards, colleges, universities, community agencies, private institutions, and so on. Provinces, colleges, and school boards differ greatly in the priority they place on supporting language training for immigrants within their jurisdictions.

There is interest on the parts of governments, academics, and immigrants themselves to specify what official language learning needs there are and how well they are being met. Despite the evident expenditure of money and effort on language training, we have no clear idea about how well we are reaching people who need it. We know how many people who speak neither English nor French come into Canada every year. We know where they settle first, but cannot track them if they move around the country. It is clear that Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal are becoming the main immigrant reception centres. We know virtually nothing about how much official language immigrants learn or how they learn it. We know a little about how much they learn and how, when they come to formal classes, but these data are generally not comparable from institution to institution and we cannot know how many of these people we are counting twice because they are taking more than one course. More importantly, immigrants learn language at different rates for various reasons, they learn it in informal as well as formal ways, and they have differing goals about how much of the language they need to learn. Statistics such as census data are too vague to tell us much about the official language skills of immigrants and, even if we knew what their language skills were, we would have no way of knowing whether these skills were adequate for the needs and goals of individuals. There are many immigrants who live in Canada for a long time leading satisfactory and productive lives without learning an official language at all, but there are also many others who feel trapped, isolated, and thwarted by their lack of command of English or French.

Language in the workplace training has had a chequered history over the past fifteen years or so. In some provinces it was offered as part of the federally sponsored training in the 1970s. School boards, community colleges, and some private agencies have increasingly made contracts with employers over the past decade or so to offer language training in the workplace. To a large extent these contracts were a result of the educational body approaching the employer, not the other way around. Some unions have also been active in setting up language training in the workplace or union hall, with or without the cooperation of management. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship has developed its support for English in the workplace to become multiculturalism in the workplace. In other words, it promotes programs that not only provide language and cultural training for workers but also includes cross-cultural training for non-immigrant employees so that each group learns to adjust appropriately and productively to each other. Very recently, Employment and Immigration Canada has been experimenting with pre-employment and job entry level training that combines ESL with job skill development.

In light of this situation, we would like to make three points with regards to this study. One concerns the importance of workplace language training as a means of reaching immigrants who have no other practical access to language training. There is a strong tendency among new immigrants to get employment as soon as possible once they enter the country. Obviously, the need for income is a primary motivator. However, it appears that many immigrants also have a strong psychological need to have the security and stability of employment even if there might be significant long-term benefits to their taking language training before looking for a job. It is often the case that they have strong motivations to earn money not only to provide for themselves and their immediate families but also to assist their relatives in their home countries and to bring some of them to Canada. Once established in the kinds of jobs that are available to people who have little official language fluency, they are often too committed to the demands of their work and family to find the time to take language classes. Shift work often makes it impossible for them to get access to classes. Also, for those with very little command of English/French and few contacts in the community, it is very difficult for them to get information about what classes and other settlement services are available to them. Cultural factors and/or childcare responsibilities often make it specially difficult for women to get to language classes. Our point here is that English in the workplace classes offer unique access to official language learning for people, particularly women, who have got themselves into a work and home situation where they have no time or resources to manoeuvre themselves into a better position economically, socially, culturally, or as citizens. It is understandable that some Canadian-born workers view the provision of workplace language classes for immigrants as a special perquisite from the employer while they have to go out and find means of upgrading their skills on their own. It is likely that they have difficulty in imagining how limited the resources are of people who do not speak the language of the community and do not know what kinds of services might be available to them.

Our second point concerns the role that workplace language training plays in labourforce development in Canada. Immigrants bring with them valuable skills, developed at the expense of their home country. Canada needs these skills, but many of them are not available to the labourmarket if the immigrants do not speak English or French. It is largely with this perspective in mind that the federal government has supported, since the 1960s, official language training for immigrants destined for the labourforce. Such training has almost always been offered as pre-employment training rather than in the workplace. In the past decade or so it has been some provincial governments, school boards, colleges, unions, and a few private sector organizations which have taken the initiative to take language training into the workplace for those workers who have found employment but have not learned the language. As immigration continues to increase, employers, particularly those in areas which receive many newcomers, are becoming increasingly aware of the need for and advantages of providing language training for their immigrant workers. In this field, Levi Strauss has gained the reputation of being a leader.

Our third point is that there is a wide range in the kinds of skills and experience that immigrants bring with them to this country. Lack of knowledge of English/French is a great leveller in terms of what they appear capable of doing in Canadian society. Differences hidden beneath the surface may account for variation in reactions that immigrant workers have to English language classes, to trying to speak English to other staff in the plant, to promotion in the company, to integration into the social life of the plant, to taking initiatives in their work, and so on.

(1) Immigrants differ considerably with respect to the amount and kinds of change they have to make in order to adjust to life in Canada. Cultural aspects between their home country and Canada may be more or less different. People who have come from rural areas and who are now living in an urban environment have specific adjustments to make. Also, most are working in an occupation that is different from the one they had before coming here. Factors such as these place varying learning loads on individual immigrants. (2) Immigrants' needs change over time as they learn, one by one, to deal with all aspects of their lives in this new country. Their priorities and purposes for learning change. For example, immigrants who have been here for some time and who have children who were brought up here may have concerns about communicating with their children who increasingly speak English rather than their mother tongue. (3) Experience in ESL teaching has shown that learners who have low levels of education and literacy in their first language are likely to experience specific difficulties with regular language classes. Factors in these difficulties include lack of experience in formal educational situations, the amount of reading and writing used by teachers in classes, and the fact that these learners cannot use literacy as a personal aid for language learning (e.g. notes or bilingual dictionaries). It has been demonstrated that such learners can do well in ESL learning, but generally only if they are taught in classes designed to take into account the point at which they are starting to learn both the oral language and literacy skills. (4) Immigrants differ with respect to the amount of confidence they have in being able to learn English and to particiate fully in Canadian life around them. Cultural, educational, age, and other factors influence their level of confidence. (5) Some immigrants, and particularly refugees, may have suffered trauma as a result of leaving their home countries. Those who left countries at was especially may feel guilty about having left others behind and have suffered atrocities on the way here. It may take them years to stabilize their personal lives with respect to these experiences. (6) Finally but critically, immigrants' language learning and cultural adaptation is strongly influenced by the kinds and qualities of formal and informal learning opportunities they have in their environment. Supportive contacts with English speakers and opportunities to use the language in unthreatening circumstances enhances language learning and the cultural exchange that goes with it. Efforts to make immigrants aware of the settlement services available to them can help relieve them of the task of learning everything in isolation and by trail and error.

Appreciation of these differences in background can help the company and individual plants to develop means to support immigrant workers to the immigrants' own benefit and that of the plant.

Following are the reports on the three plants studied, Stoney Creek, Brantford, and Edmonton.

THE STONEY CREEK PLANT

Introduction: The Research

The Levi Strauss plant at Stoney Creek was the first plant that the research team investigated. The data were collected over a period of two weeks from February 12, 1990 to February 23, 1990 and the researchers spent a total of six days in the plant. On five of these days two researchers collected data at the plant; on the sixth day, three researchers participated. During this time, the researchers interviewed both salaried and non-salaried employees as well as the English language teacher. Individual interviews were conducted with the plant manager, the human resources manager, the human resources assistant, the training manager, the plant nurse, the English language teacher, instructors, shop stewards and numerous operators. Group interviews were conducted with the beginner ESL class, the intermediate ESL class, and the supervisors. Two researchers also attended a company "rap" session (an informal management/worker meeting), observed two ESL classes, and undertook an introductory training session run by one of the plant instructors. We were given an extensive tour of the plant, regularly observed operators at their stations and in the cafeteria, and spoke informally to various employees. We collected documents (application forms, teaching materials, plant memos) and examined teaching resources such as textbooks.

The Plant

The Site and Operation

The plant is located in the town of Stoney Creek on the outskirts of a medium-sized city (Hamilton) in southern Ontario, a relatively densely populated area of Canada which tends to draw new immigrants in search of employment. There are numerous other factories in the area including a number of other sewing plants. Many employees rely on public transportation to get to work but these services are limited. However, a public bus makes a "Levi Strauss loop" at fixed times during the day as a service to Levi Strauss employees.

The plant itself is fairly spacious with high ceilings The noise level on the plant floor is high and all employees are required to wear earplugs and safely glasses. There is little conversation on the floor. Operators are divided into sections, each of which includes a designated number of sewing operations. Workers within sections are generally surrounded by trolleys piled high with jeans. The cafeteria is a pleasant room with large windows. It has prominent displays of "President Club" members, that is, workers who have reached a high level of production. There is a noticeboard outside the cafeteria that displays safety regulations in a number of different languages. Other notices (union, community involvement, fundraising) are in English. The English language class takes place in the boardroom in the executive section of the plant. There is only one shift at Stoney Creek - from 7am to 4pm Monday to Thursday, 7am to 1pm Friday.

The plant at Stoney Creek is a sewing facility. Jeans are cut and sewn at the plant and then sent to Brantford for laundering and Rexdale for distribution. All operators are skilled in at least one sewing operation (risers, zipper, pockets, inseam, fellseam etc) and about 65 of the 300 employees have been cross-trained in more than one operation. While the operators are all piecework employees, the cutters and quality control clerks are paid hourly wages. The plant is described as having "lots of power" in the sewing, but at the time of the study a lack of experienced workers was slowing production in the cutting area of the plant. The plant has many skilled sewing operators to rely on, but a less reliable source of skilled cutters.

The Workforce

The total number of employees in the plant is approximately 370, 70 of whom are salaried employees. Of the remaining 300 piecework and hourly employees, 95% are women. While females dominate on the factory floor, the cutting area is predominantly male. In the administration, females dominate in the secretarial functions of the plant, males and females are found in middle management, while males dominate in senior management. A wide variety of ethnic groups are represented in the plant and the majority of the workforce speak English as a second language. Dominant groups in the plant are Italian (20%), Slavic (15%), East Indian (20%), Spanish (10%) but there are also Polish, Greek, Vietnamese, and Hungarian employees. About 40% of the workforce is Canadian born and speaks English as a first language. Most of the plant supervisors speak more than one language and are generally representative of the ethnic composition of the plant floor. The plant makes extensive use of interpreters to deal with communication needs on the floor.

Most of the hourly and piecework employees live in the Stoney Creek/Hamilton area. A number of them have been at Levi Strauss for over 10 years, have well-established networks of friends, and are familiar with their jobs and the company. A majority, however, are young, and there is a high turnover within this group. Many employees are recent immigrants to this country. (We witnessed pictures in the washroom which indicated that it is unacceptable for employees to stand on the toilet seats.) Friendships appeared to be determined by ethnicity and native language.

Generally speaking, there appears to be a very good relationship between operators, supervisors and management in the Stoney Creek plant. In each section a "buddy system" has been established to help new employees integrate into plant life. The "rap" sessions between management and non-salaried workers indicate that management takes the views of the non-salaried workers seriously and that the latter are an integral and essential part of plant life. We were impressed that the non-salaried workers could air their grievances as well as share their successes with senior management. One of these workers felt comfortable enough to tell the plant manager that non-salaried workers "have rights too". We were very impressed with the interest that the human resources personnel took in the quality of life of the non-salaried workers. It was the human resources manager who first initiated the ESL program at Stoney Creek in 1979.

It is important to note that, despite management efforts to improve the working conditions of the non-salaried employees, there is still a fairly high turnover at the Stoney Creek plant. For this reason, new employees are continually being hired and the ESL classes play an important role in the training of these new employees. Because of the continuous intake in the ESL classes, new employees can slot into an ESL class as soon as they feel able to cope with the demands of a new course of instruction. A significant point mentioned by the human resources manager is that 50% of the employees who leave Levi Strauss return to work at the plant at a later date.

Communications Patterns in the Plant

Many different languages are spoken in the plant. While languages other than English are spoken in the cafeteria and on the shop floor, English is the dominant language for employer/employee communication. Most of this communication takes an oral rather than written form.

Employer-driven communication needs include:

- training employees as they enter the plant
- checking regularly on quality control
- reporting human resources services in the plant
- addressing employees through the public address system
- inviting participation in rap sessions
- communicating the corporate vision to employees
- conducting climate and other surveys.

Employee-driven communication needs include:

- discussing machine or quality problems with supervisors or instructors
- reporting work completed to supervisors
- reporting conflicts to supervisors
- interacting with human resources (absenteeism, illness, etc.)
- participating in rap sessions, union meetings, committees and clubs

- interacting socially on the floor and in the cafeteria.

Much of the human resources information is available in written form: applications for jobs, plant surveys, safety rules (though these are generally available in a variety of languages), pay cheques, new job postings. On the plant floor, tickets are used to show that work has been completed; there are computer printouts of daily production; some machines have instructions written on them. In other arenas, notices of union meetings and social activities in the plant are posted outside the cafeteria and are written in English; there are forms to fill out for goods in the employee store. Levi Strauss also produces a company newsletter "Keeping Tabs," but we saw little evidence of this newsletter in the plant.

Management, supervisors and operators have developed a variety of strategies to deal with communication needs in the plant. Extensive use is made of interpreters. The interpreters are not officially appointed and are used in an ad hoc way. Some supervisors don't like using interpreters because they feel that a lot of information is lost in translation. In addition, a number of supervisors indicated that they feel as though they lose control of the dialogue when an interpreter is present. Interpreters are compensated for the time they spend interpreting. There is also a lot of informal translation evident in the plant.

When supervisors could speak the native language of the employee, supervisors would generally use this language as the medium of communication. If a supervisor and employee both had a second or third language in common (other than English) this language would be used for communication purposes. Where possible, supervisors would communicate in English, but the tendency was to communicate in the language that was seen to be most effective and efficient at the time.

It is important to note that we saw little evidence of social conversation on the plant floor. All the operators were intensely preoccupied with their work and would only leave their machines to fetch new bundles of jeans. The opportunity for learners of English to practice their English was therefore minimal. Since the supervisor has the most individual contact with operators, the role of the supervisor in encouraging operators to use English and helping learners express themselves is essential.

The extent to which non-English speakers have access to the wider life and culture of the plant depends on a number of factors including the learner's access to friendship networks, the personality of the learner, and the English teacher's knowledge of the day-to-day activities in the plant.

The ESL Program

Of the three plants investigated in this study, the English language program at Stoney Creek has the longest history. Classes began informally in 1979 when the human resources manager recognized the need for English language training for non-English speaking employees. Initially, the program was offered after hours and employees were not given compensation for their attendance at these classes. The human resources manager taught these classes. In 1981 the Levi Strauss: English in the Workplace project was initiated by Levi Strauss Canada, Inc. to develop teaching materials for these courses. The teaching kit contains a teacher's guide, tapes, and a great deal of stimulus material. The English language course became a more permanent structure in the plant at this time.

Today, the English language course is being run by the Hamilton-Wentworth Separate School Board. Immediately prior to this, the course had been run by Mohawk College in Hamilton. Levi Strauss made this change in the summer of 1989 for administrative and financial reasons.

The English language teacher is employed on a part-time basis by the board and teaches a total of 6 hours a week at the plant in Stoney Creek. While highly educated, the teacher does not have any formal teaching qualifications. The room provided for teaching purposes is a very comfortable meeting room in the front office that is used for a variety of purposes. There is a large table in the room and employees sit around the table while the teacher stands at the head of the table. The room is rather crowded. Employees each have their own folders that are kept in a drawer in the room. Attendance is taken at each class. There appears to be very regular attendance at the classes.

Employees who have difficulty in communicating in English are informed of the English language program during their orientation to the plant. They are encouraged to speak to their supervisor if they are interested in attending the classes. Sometimes it is the supervisors themselves who draw the employees' attention to the existence of the classes and encourage them to attend. While we were attending one ESL class, a supervisor arrived with a new student that she had literally "walked to" the class. Most new employees wait until they have reached 100% efficiency in their particular sewing operation before they begin to attend the classes. It is evident that supervisors play a very supportive role in the English course and go to great lengths to initiate enrollment.

There are currently two English language classes - a beginner and an intermediate class - which each meet three times a week for an hourly session. The Intermediate group meets from 11 -12 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Beginner group meets from 12 -1 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. There are approximately 15 employees in each class. However, because there is continuous intake, the number of employees in the classes changes fairly regularly as some employees leave the program and others join. There is no clearly defined exit test or graduation from the course.

The operators use their 1/2 hour lunch break for the class, while Levi Strauss pays the employees for the other 1/2 hour of class time. This amount is determined for each individual by the quarterly average of the employee's earnings. Employees generally buy their lunch in the cafeteria before coming to class and then eat their lunch while the class is in progress. This cuts down on the time employees actually spend in class.

The teacher sets the agenda for the class, but the human resources manager takes responsibility for passing company information to the ESL teacher. The lessons we observed concentrated on teaching the employees aspects of English grammar and pronunciation. Some attempt was made to link the curriculum to the experience of the employees in the plant. For example, in one of the classes we observed, the teacher helped the employees to complete a plant questionnaire about the employee store run at the plant. The majority of workers in the class were young people and new immigrants in Canada. A variety of ethnic groups were represented. At the time, there was only one male enrolled. Some social conversation took place in non-English languages. The teacher was not familiar with the English in the Workplace kit that had been designed for the English language course at Stoney Creek.

It is important to note that there has been high turnover of teachers in the program. For example, from July 1989 to February 1990, the employees had four different teachers. There has been a lack of continuity from one teacher to the next - which has been exacerbated by the changeover in administration from Mohawk College to the separate school board

Employee Perceptions and Evaluation of the ESL Program

Management assessment

The managerial staff (including plant manager and human resources people) are in full support of the English language program. They all emphasized the point that better knowledge of English makes non-English speaking employees happier, more independent and more flexible in their work - in other words, more able to deal with a variety of tasks on the plant floor. The management made frequent reference to Levi Strauss' "Mission, Vision, and Values" focus and indicated that if the company's attempts to promote teamwork, mutual respect, and trust are to be implemented, then it is essential that all employees be able to communicate with one another. The management expressed no concern that the presence of the ESL class might educate the employees to leave the plant. On the contrary, the management believes that the ESL program gives the employees greater investment in the plant, enables them to develop social networks, and hence reduces employee turnover. The plant manager believes, in fact, that the program should have more of a presence in the plant than it currently enjoys. A human resources person said that the existence of the ESL class gives her more latitude in employment decisions because she knows that if potential employees have no knowledge of English, they will have access to the language through the language program. The management has been happy with the quality of teaching that has taken place in the program and the human resources manager tries to keep the teacher informed of any documents or issues in the plant that could be dealt with in the English class. Many of the managerial staff, however, are not familiar with the curriculum that is taught in the plant and the extent to which the course is indeed geared towards communication needs in the workplace.

Supervisor assessment

Virtually all supervisors were in favour of the program and encouraged their operators to attend English classes on a regular basis. There was unanimous agreement that if non-English speaking operators had better access to the English language, they would become more independent workers and happier employees. Like the managers, the supervisors indicated that the company's commitment to "mission, vision and values" would be promoted if all employees had enhanced communication skills. Despite the fact that operators learning English spend 1 and 1/2 hours a week of production time in the English program, the supervisors expressed no resentment at the possible drop in production and the need to reorganize their lines a little to ensure smooth workflow. None of them indicated that other employees felt resentment towards those employees taking the English classes. A number stated, in fact, that they would like to see an expansion of the English language program. They stated that they would prefer to be less reliant on interpreters than they currently are. They indicated, for example, that it is awkward to use an interpreter to issue an employee with a warning. Most supervisors felt that they could notice improvement in the language ability and confidence of operators who were taking the course and a number of supervisors actively encouraged reticent non-English speakers to take the course. They said operators felt proud when they could express their concerns in English.

Worker assessment

When we interviewed the plant operators to determine their perceptions of the English language program, we were interested in three groups of operators: those who were currently in the program; those who had dropped out of the program; those who were reluctant to join the program. We wanted to find out if the program was meeting the communication needs of the workplace as outlined above.

The employees who are currently attending the English classes (approximately 35) are very happy with the program. They say that that they like the opportunity to learn English - not only for workplace needs but also to help them integrate into Canadian society. They enjoy meeting other employees who are not in their section and they like the concentrated exposure to the English language. They are very happy that Levi Strauss has provided them with this service and they like their English teacher. They said that nobody had ever expressed resentment to them that they had access to a service that was not available to English speaking employees. They are all happy that the class is offered in the middle of the day because many of them have to leave the plant as soon as the shift is over in order to take care of their children, prepare dinner and perform many domestic duties. They indicated that the Levi Strauss program provides the only opportunity for them to learn English because their domestic responsibilities often keep them housebound.

While many of these employees were unable to suggest any ways the English program could be improved, a number indicated that some of the teachers have been better than others. They like teachers who make themselves clearly understood and use interesting material in class. Some employees said that the English classes have been increasing in size and that the classes are now too large for them to learn efficiently. The level of the class is thus also a problem - it is too easy for some, too difficult for others. In the Beginner class, the level and size of the class is particularly problematic because the employees' competence in English ranges from complete novice (possibly illiterate in the native language) to low intermediate. Some of them are under the impression that they may "lose money" by taking the English course, but they believe the course is worth the drop in income (real or imagined).

The employees who had dropped out of the course had done so for a variety of reasons. One said that she had been anxious and nervous during the classes and did not want to pursue the lessons; another said that she had felt "dumb" during the classes. One said that she had found the class too elementary for her; she had hoped to develop reading and writing skills but the curriculum had not focussed on these areas. Another said her domestic situation was creating stress in her life and she thought that the English classes would add to that stress. Another said she missed the friends she usually had lunch with and that the teacher was not very good.

The supervisors identified a number of operators who would benefit from the English language program, but who are not currently attending the classes. When we asked them why they had not signed up for the course, they gave a variety of responses. Most said that they knew very little about the program; nobody had asked them to sign up; they didn't know it was available to them. Some said they wanted to wait till they had achieved their 100% before they enrolled in the English program. Those who knew a little about the program thought that they would lose money if they signed up. Another said he didn't want to learn English because he was a refugee and hoped to return to his country when the political situation stabilized. One said that she lost momentum in her work when she attended the classes and therefore dropped out.

There were a couple of employees who were eager to attend the English classes but had been told by the supervisors that their English was "good enough" and that there were already "too many girls" in the program. This indicates that supervisors play a role in both encouraging and discouraging enrollment in the the English course.

Teacher assessment

The ESL teacher had only recently been appointed to the part-time teaching position at Levi Strauss by the Separate School Board. The previous teacher had been assigned another task by the board. The teacher was therefore not in a position to give a comprehensive report on the program. She did say, however, that both Beginner and Intermediate classes are becoming overcrowded. The turnover in the plant has slowed down and there is no longer the same attrition rate as the plant is accustomed to. She said it is difficult to cater to the disparate levels of English of the employees in her classes, and believes that smaller classes that would cater to different levels would better serve the employees' interests. She says the classes are effectively less than an hour because because employees buy their lunch before coming to class.

The teacher said that the employees who make the most progress are those who "talk more" and have outgoing personalities. She said that people from Europe tended to be more talkative than employees from other parts of the world. She attributed this to a European model of education that is similar to that in North America, and to the encouragement given to this group of employees on the plant floor. She said that some refugees might have limited levels of education which disadvantages them relative to other learners. She noted that people from the Orient and south-east Asia had particular problems with pronunciation, and that the Roman script is unfamiliar to many non-European learners of English.

Analysis

The English language program at Stoney Creek has great potential. On the basis of our observations, it appears that Stoney Creek has the most important ingredients for a successful workplace program: supportive supervisors and a management team that takes seriously the company's commitment to the education of a more flexible, communicative workforce.

There are two main reasons why employees who are eager to learn English must have a supportive work environment. First, employees who attend classes must feel that their supervisors are in favour of the program. It appears that many non-English speaking employees, particularly those who are new to the plant and recent arrivals in Canada, feel very vulnerable and insecure in the workplace and do not want to antagonize their supervisors or instructors in any way. Without the support of their supervisors, employees are reluctant to participate in the English language program. At Stoney Creek, it appears that there is generally a very good relationship between the supervisors and the operators.

In addition, there appears to be a good relationship between management and the operators. Because of the buddy system and the rap sessions that are initiated by management, operators have the opportunity to air their grievances and bring important issues to the attention of management. Operators are encouraged to inform management of ways in which both production and the quality of life of operators can be improved. The management, in turn, takes the opportunity to keep the operators informed of activities in the plant, management objectives and so forth. Nevertheless, employees need to be proficient in the English language in order to avail themselves of the opportunity to air grievances as well as offer suggestions for the improvement of their working conditions. The more proficient speakers of English may have more opportunity to perform these tasks than the less proficient speakers.

The second reason why a supportive work environment is necessary for the English program to succeed is because the people with whom language learners communicate in English are predominantly supervisors, instructors, human resources people and management. If language learners are to practice their English outside the English class, they need to have patient and supportive people to speak to. There isn't much opportunity for employees to practice their English on the floor as routine language demands on the floor are limited. In the canteen, employees tend to sit with members of their own ethnic groups. English speaking Canadians in the plant generally have their own friendship networks, and generally do not socialize with non-English speakers. For this reason, the role of supervisors as "language teachers" is significant because the supervisors have more English language contact with the operators than any other group of people in the plant. If the employees feel uncomfortable with their supervisors, they will find it difficult to risk using broken English to communicate. Fortunately, it appears that the supervisors at Stoney Creek have taken up the roles of language teachers in supportive and compassionate ways.

While there is a supportive workplace environment at Stoney Creek, the potential of the English language program has not been fully realized. Although the program takes place at the plant, there appears to be only an ad hoc relationship between the curriculum that is offered and the communication needs in the Stoney Creek plant. While we do not recommend that only "workplace English" be promoted in the course, we believe that workplace issues, materials, and resources should be more integral to the language curriculum than is currently the case. We believe that a greater emphasis should be placed on communicative skills within the framework of authentic materials which reflect both workplace needs as well as broader social and cultural needs. In this way, the ESL teacher can serve as an invaluable resource for management, supervisors, and operators. The role of the ESL teacher as a resource person is particularly important in the Stoney Creek plant because the high turnover and the large number of new immigrants in the plant places great demands of the company's training resources.

In order to help the teacher implement a more communicative and relevant curriculum, we would recommend at least one more class be offered, so that learners can be divided into learners with low levels of formal education/literacy, other beginners, and a more advanced class. The class for those with low levels of formal education should be kept to a limit of five learners. Alternatively, such learners might be tutored individually for a while until they are ready to join a small class. Even excluding the special challenges presented by the inclusion of learners with low levels of formal education, the current class sizes are too large for efficient learning to take place: there isn't enough time for individual learners to practice their oral skills, and it is difficult for the teacher to give the learners much individual attention. This tends to be exacerbated by the current system of continuous intake. The ESL teacher might find the teaching kit developed specifically for Levi Strauss a useful resource.

There was some confusion amongst the operators as to what kind of compensation they receive when they attend the English classes. Because compensation is based on the quarterly average of the employees, many of whom are in the process of become increasingly efficient in their operations, they do potentially "lose money" when they attend the English class. In other words, their quarterly average often does not reflect their current rate of productivity. Despite the possible drop in income (minor though this might be) most employees believed attendance at the ESL class was more important than the amount of money "lost".

We are concerned about the teacher turnover. While we believe that learners can benefit from exposure to different native speakers, different personalities, and different teaching styles, it appears that the frequent turnover of teachers has created a lack of continuity in the program. Unless there is continuity from one teacher to the next, the learning process is affected and the employees' confidence in the program undermined. A more clearly defined curriculum and a more structured relationship between the language teacher, management, and plant floor would make the teacher turnover less problematic and the English language program more effective. If the school board cannot provide a teacher with formal qualifications in ESL and support him or her in the special strategies needed to develop and maintain an English in the workplace program, then perhaps another source of teachers should be pursued.

THE BRANTFORD PLANT

Introduction: The Research

The Brantford plant was the second site investigated by the OISE team. Research began on Monday, February 26th, 1990 and continued until Friday, March 16th. In total five visits were made to the plant; each visit lasted between eight and ten hours. Two researchers and on one occasion an additional researcher collected data during that time. The research team interviewed various employees individually and in groups, observed plant operations, visited ESL classes and toured the plant. Specifically, researchers spoke to the plant manager, human resources manager, training manager, shift managers, the company nurse, the human resources assistant, and the ESL teacher. As well, thirty-six piecework or hourly workers were interviewed individually. Of that number six were currently in the ESL programs, twelve had once been in the class, and eighteen had never attended. The majority of those workers interviewed were sewing machine or steam press operators; others worked in the washing facility, some were auditor clerks, and some were line workers designated as lead hands. Supervisors were interviewed as a group as part of shift meetings and later several were interviewed individually. Some interviews were tape recorded; however, because of discomfort some employees felt with the procedure, the research team discontinued the practice and instead took notes during the interviews. Two ESL classes were visited by the researchers. Teaching materials and reports were collected and general discussions held with the students. As well, during the research, general plant operations were observed and informal discussions were held with various employees.

Analysis of the data was done collectively by the research team. Preliminary descriptions and analysis were shared with the Brantford plant.

The Plant

The Site and Operation

Brantford is a laundry facility located on the outskirts of a small city in a densely populated area of Ontario. Light industry sustains the economy and numerous garment factories are located in the region. It is important to note for this study that there are large immigrant populations in nearby Toronto and Hamilton, so that new Canadians are drawn to this area of the country and a large workforce is available.

As a laundry facility, Brantford is quite different in operation from the plants at Stoney Creek and Edmonton. Garments produced at the sewing plants are sent to Brantford where they are laundered according to various formulas, are then pressed, repaired if necessary, labelled, checked numerous times, packed and finally sent to Rexdale for distribution. There appeared to be a greater variety in the types of jobs required at the Brantford plant. The majority of the jobs appeared unique to the operation.

The Brantford plant operates multiple shifts. Day shift runs Monday to Thursday 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m; the afternoon shift runs Monday to Thursday 4:15 p.m. to l:15 a.m, Friday 1:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m; the midnight shift begins with a twelve hour shift Sunday 7:00 p.m. to Monday 7:00 a.m., then runs Tuesday to Thursday 1:15 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. of the the following day. Day and afternoon shifts consist of approximately forty hours per week; midnight shifts consists of thirty-two hours per week approximately.

For each shift, plant operations are basically the same. Production begins in the wash area. This section of the factory, separate to some extent from the rest of the factory floor area, contains large washing and drying machines. Not unexpectably it is a hot, steaming, noisy area of the plan; the smell of bleach, and fabric softener fills the air. Dye and water run freely down the pathways, and that, together with pumice rock chips scattered about, make rubber boots a necessity in this area of the plant. Work is physicially demanding as large mounds of wet garments are loaded and unloaded from various machines. Machines are set so that chemical or physical abrasions are applied according to a variety of formulas. There are over one hundred formulas each producing a different finish to the garment. Workers are paid hourly and there is a group incentive bonus offerred each shift as well.

Once checked to assure the correct finish has been produced, garments are then moved to the general factory area of the plant. This area has a low ceiling and is somewhat dark and noisy. The first line of operation is steam pressing. Garments undergo various pressing operations. It is hot and steamy in this section of the factory, but large vents make the area somewhat cooler. Many of the pressing operations require that workers stand during their shift. Certain presses are operated exclusively by male operators; some by female operators. Labeling and inspection lines follow and then garments are repaired, if necessary, and finally packed in cartons. Women operators dominate this area of the plant. With the exclusion of repair work, which is paid by the hour, wages are determined by piecework in this area of the plant.

Safety glasses are worn by everyone in the factory area of the plant and, although it is noisy, the use of ear plugs is not required. According to the plant nurse, the decibel rate does not exceed safety limits. There were a number of anti-stain posters in the plant at the time the researchers were there. A symbol as well as English words made up the message. There is not a great deal of conversation that seems to take place in the factory area of the plant. Workers are very intent on their work.

Off to the side of the general factory area of the plant is the warehouse section where garments are received and shipped. Above the warehouse area of the factory is a boardroom used for a variety of purposes including the ESL class.

Another area of the plant might be called the executive section of the plant. It consists of managers' offices, a general office and reception area, a small staff room used by the supervisors for daily meetings and a large board room. It is a carpeted, windowed area of the plant; quiet, and pleasant. A cafeteria is accessible from this area and as well, from the factory section of the plant. The cafeteria is a large, pleasant, sunlit room. It is open for all shifts, although only for limited hours on the midnight shift. When the researchers were at the plant a large, computer printed banner adorned one wall of the cafeteria, announcing a plant production record. A multitude of languages can be heard in this area of the plant. There is a great deal of social conversation. Workers seem to group together according to language and occupation. Outside the cafeteria are bulletin boards with various announcements and production line charts. With the exception of safety regulations all are in English.

The Brantford plant building itself is located near a shopping area, but there is only limited access to public transportation making arrivals and departures particularly difficult for workers working afternoon and midnight shifts. Because of the midnight shift, security is a concern at the plant and the entrances are frequently locked.

The Workforce

There are approximately 478 employees at the Brantford plant. Seventy-eight are salaried staff and four hundred are production workers on hourly or piecework wages. There are approximately eighty workers on the midnight shift, 160 on the afternoon shift and another 160 on the day shift. Employees do not rotate through the shifts. They are hired for a job on a particular shift. When a job becomes available, it is offered first to present plant employees. Since many employees prefer the day shift, those who have been with the plant the longest are frequently found working days. Although some employees prefer midnights because, for example, of the difficulty of securing affordable childcare during the day, generally there is a large turnover on this shift and the most recent employees at the plant are often working midnights and to a lesser extent the afternoon shift. Turnover at the plant, which had been a concern to plant management, seems to have stablized over the last few months; nonetheless, training new employees features prominantly in this plant.

As in the other plants, the workforce is predominately female, eighty percent according to the plant manager, but this does not hold across all job categories. Female employees are frequently working in the general factory area in labeling, repair, packing, inspection, and top press; or in the general office area as clerks or in the cafeteria as cashiers. Supervisors with two exceptions are female. Similarly to other plants, senior management with the exclusion of the human resources manager, and training manager are all male. Those working in wash and in the warehouse area of the plant are all male. Those working legpress are again all male.

The ethnic composition of the plant is described as fifty percent non-Canadian born employees. Approximately fifteen percent of the total employee population are Chinese or Vietnamese, fifteen percent Polish, five percent Laotian, Latin American, and East Indian. There are also a small number of Iranians, Italians, and Hungarians. Particularly on midnights there are a large number of employees who are recent immigrants. Many of those interviewed who work this shift had only been in the country for a matter of months and a large number of these workers were Polish or Vietnamese. According to the plant manager, the ethnic composition of the plant had changed dramatically since 1983 when the majority of workers were young Canadian born (presumibly white) women who had just completed high school. Over the years the workforce has become culturally and racially diverse and composed of many recent immigrants.

Supervisors at this plant had been working for the company for some time and appeared to have come from this earlier workforce; that is, they are white Canadian-born women who speak English only and have been at the plant for at least ten years. There was one male supervisor on the afternoon shift, also Canadian born who speaks only English. Working midnight shift was the only supervisor born outside the country. He is multi-lingual, male and oriental. Middle and senior plant managers are generally male, white, Canadian born, and speak only English. On midnights a large number of the employees do not speak English at all or with little proficiency. The trainer indicated that approximately eighty percent of the workers required a translator during their orientation to the company and their job. Because of his proficiency with a number of languages, the midnight surpervisor is able to communicate with many of his workers in their native language. He estimates that about thirty percent of his staff speak English adequately for their job. Seventy percent require translators or speak with broken English.

According to supervisors, many workers on day and afternoon shifts are evidently able to cope with language demands of their job. Broken English and gestures are used and when necessary translators, informally selected by plant managers/supervisors, are used to ensure good communication.

Communication Patterns in the Plant

There are discernable patterns to the way in which language, and in particular English, is used in the Brantford plant. In some respects the patterns are similar to those in the Stoney Creek and Edmonton plants; in other respects, they are unique to the plant. There are three patterns significant to the study: language pattern by occupation, site and personal history.

Occupational Language Patterns: Workers

Similarly to other plants, the necessity and opportunity to use English increases at the Brandtford plant as one moves up the occupational ladder. For example, line workers generally have fewer work-related language needs and fewer opportunties to use English than do supervisors, secretarial staff or managers. By and large this appears to be a function of the nature and structure of the work.

The work of sewing machine and steam press operators is solitary and physical. After training, language is required only sporadically on the job. Specifically, language is needed when there is a difficulty with a machine, in sorting out piles, in reporting work completed, in participating in occasional company meetings, when interacting with human resources personnel or the company nurse concerning benefits, salary, absentism and illness. Reading and writing English is necessary when filling in the occasional form or survey, and reading company or union information. Thus, at it stands now, operators have only infrequent need to use the English language. It is, of course, this very characteristic that draws immigrants who have little proficiency in the language to seek employment with the plant.

During a shift in the factory area of the plant, it appeared to the researchers that most of communication occurs between a supervisor and an operator, rather than among operators or other employees. Since the supervisors are English only speakers, communication must be conducted in some rudimentary form of English, or using physical gestures, or with the aid of a translator.

Those workers who work in wash are exposed to English more frequently than others in the factory area of the plant. As a result of a strong effort to build teamwork because of a group incentive bonus, more conversation occurs among workers. Since there is some variety in terms of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds in wash, workers may be more likely to speak English and, therefore, make more progress in improving their spoken English.

Supervisors must communicate on a daily basis with various employees in the plant as they are the link between senior plant management and the line workers. They are the key connection between plant and company policy and plant practice. They must be able to speak, read and write standard English for their work with management and communicate in simplified English with their workers who are not proficient in the language. Unlike in the other plants, supervisors at Brantford are English-only speakers. Should they wish to improve their literacy skills they would be attending some form of out-of-house (external to the company) training, or upgrading program. Because lead hands take on the responsiblities of the supervisor when the supervisor is absent from the floor, they have greater opportunity to speak English than do other operators. They gain greater practical experience with the language and may make greater progress in improving their English. As well, we surmise that a lead hand may be chosen because she already has some proficiency with the language. Since the supervisor chooses her lead hand, the individual is likely to be someone with whom the supervisor can already communicate reasonably well. Although other characteristics would also be important, proficiency in the langage to some degree may thus affect promotion to the position of lead hand. Then, once the operator is promoted, the chance to use English is increased and greater progress with the language is possible. Many of the lead hands interviewed spoke English as a second language and they were, by and large, reasonably proficient speakers.

As a note, clerical staff are constantly exposed to spoken and written English and must be able to communicate in standard English to management and, in dealing with non-English workers, simplified English. Like the supervisors, the human resources assistant, in particular, is an important link between the workers and management in the plant's communication system.

Occupational Language Patterns: Management

Because the work of management tends to be conceptual rather than physical, language figures prominently. Supervisors and management communication needs include training employees, ensuring quality and quantity of production through individual and group meetings, policy development, and writing and completing various company reports, surveys, and other documents. Managers communicate with plant employees and with other plants and with head office personnel, linking company vision and policy to plant policy and practice. Since the language of company administration is English, a manager is constantly exposed to the language. The varied audiences managers address in their work demand a very high level of proficiency both in written and spoken standard English and, ideally, a flexibility and sensitivity to less proficient users of the language in their plant.

Language According to Work Space

Similarly to the Edmonton and Stoney Creek plants, the language patterns at Brantford are such that one is exposed to language, and to standard English in particular, on a continuous basis in the executive section of the plant. One the factory floor, depending on one's position, language use is less necessary and exposure to standard English less likely to occur. The exception to this occurs in the wash area of the factory where more work-related communication takes place and more English may be heard.

The cafeteria is one site where much conversation does take place although, because it is a social rather than work setting, most of the conversation that occurs is conducted not in English but in the language common among co-workers who choose to sit together. English is of course heard three hours a week in ESL classes for those who attend. A cross-section of the plant at any particular moment of a shift would reveal differences in the variety and quantity of English used in various areas of the plant. The degree to which one's worklife is spent in one area or another may affect the nature of one's work-related communication and, for immigrants specifically, progress in learning English.

Language Pattern According to Worker Profile

It appeared from those interviewed that a large number of line opeators are recent immigrants. Many of those intervewed on midnights, for example, had been in the country for less than a year. Many of the men interviewed were alone in Canada, attempting to establish themselves and then bring over their families. Learning the culture and learning English was seen as very important. Many had taken a ten week English class offered at Mohawk College when they first arrived. Not unexpectedly these workers rely heavily on friends in the plant and in the community who speak their language. They are not generally exposed to a great deal of English socially or even at work.

Many of the line workers are women and recent immigrants. For single women, new to the country, often family and friends in the ethnic community form a support network; for married women their own families are important as well. Relying on this network, they learn to cope with the Canadian culture and with language demands made upon them. Some have taken English classes in their home country; some have taken one of the short English courses offered new immigrants in Canada; some have learned a small amount of English without formal instruction. Particularly for those who have been at home raising families, they may lag behind their children who are learning English at school and often their husband who may be learning more English on the job. Coming to work at Brantford, they learn about the job and the company through translators and demonstration. They will learn short phrases and broken English to communicate with their supervisors and the few other English-speaking employees they must deal with. They learn to cope with the language demands of the job and, since there are not many linguistic demands, they may not make much progress in English. Socially they can communicate to co-workers who speak their own language and at home to their families so that, unless the nature and structure of their job alters or their private life changes dramatically, their proficiency with English will not vastly improve once they learn the job, unless special efforts are made. If circumstances do not change, a line worker will not greatly improve her English, and will be less promotable, less able to participate on company task forces and committees, less able to play a part in the decisions made by the plant or union, simply less actively involved in the life of the company. Her ability to address specific job-related concerns to company officials will always be hampered by a lack proficiency with the language.

It is important to note that, for many women, family responsibilities and financial circumstances make enrolment in out-of-house educational programs difficult. For example, child care for some women with young families can be difficult to obtain or impossible to afford.

It would seem that line workers who are not employed in the wash section of the factory, who are not in the ESL class, whose co-workers, friends and family are non-English speakers, and who rarely have contact with management, the company nurse or HR personnel are not exposed to much English during their shift. Women in particular may have family and household responsiblities as well as cultural expectations that interfere with progress in the language which ultimately effects their participation in the culture of the plant and in Canadian society generally.

The ESL Program

The ESL program at the Brantford plant began in 1987. There have been only two teachers since the inception of the program. The current teacher is under personal contract with the company. She has been with the plant for one year. She is an accredited teacher but has no formal ESL training.

Currently two classes are available for workers both on day and afternoon shifts. Those working days can attend Monday through Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Those on the afternoon shift attend 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. or 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Three hours of instruction in total are offerred per week. As in the Stoney Creek program, students give up their half hour lunch break and eat during lessons. They are compensated for the half hour of worktime they give up in order to attend class. Workers are paid for those half hours of worktime according to their quarterly average wage. During a regular shift those attending class are at their work stations for seven and a half hours, whereas other workers are at their stations for eight hours. This is similar to the situation at the Stoney Creek plant.

Unlike the program at Stoney Creek, the Brantford classes offered do not differ in level, that is, there is no distinct advanced and beginners program. In each classes students may varying in their levels of ability with the language. However it appeared to researchers that all of those currently attending might be considered beginners. It should be noted that some who attend are particularly handicapped, according to the ESL teacher, in that they are not literate in their native language so that learning to read and write English becomes a much more difficult task.

Unlike at Stoney Creek there is not continuous intake into the program; rather, seventeen week sessions are offerred. Currently there are twenty students in total enrolled in the program, five per class. When the program began in 1988, there were forty students enrolled.

In the past new workers have not been told of the program during their orientation to the plant although this may have now changed. Generally, information about the program is passed along to new employees by co-workers and supervisors. Supervisors are expected to refer students to the program prior to the commencement of a new session. The teacher conducts an interview with each potential student to assess their language needs. Workers are expected to ask supervisors for permission to attend class each day. Occasionally permission is denied due to work demands although this has been happening less frequently over the past last few months, according to the teacher. After each session workers who wish to attend another session must again garner the permission of their supervisor. Frequently this permission is denied in order that another from the line who has not been allowed to attend might be given the opportunity. From the number of those attending it would appear that each supervisor is allowing one or two from the line to attend each session. Currently no one from the wash section on any shift is attending the program. Supervisors in this area of the plant adamantly believe that they can not sacrifice a worker for even one half hour without seriously affecting the operation and production rate not only of their section, but of the entire plant.

Those workers on midnight shift can attend without pay any of the classes offered during the day or afternoon shifts. Workers find it difficult to schedule the class into their private lives, and no one on midnights has availed themselves of the classes. It is important to note that if a more convenient time could be arranged many employees working midnights indicated they would attend. The midnight supervisor collected the names of twenty workers who would commit themselves to such an ESL program. The class time suggested was an hour prior to the beginning of shift.

Classes are held in a large room above the factory floor. It is quiet, slightly overheated but more than adequate in terms of space.

The curriculum of the program has been developed by the teacher. The curriculum document shows a blend of work-related and non-work-related topics. Money and banking, for example, form one topic, shopping and restaurants another, production at the plant yet another. Generally, it would appear that personal non-work-related topics dominate, although this may change from session to session. Lessons focus on oral comunication, although some reading and writing is done as well. Although the lessons are planned in advance, the teacher will modify her lesson in order to meet an emergent curriculum demands made by the company or by students.

The plant provides materials for the class and staff pass along company memos, newsletters, surveys, etc. that employees receive. These are incorporated into lessons.

Employee Perceptions and Evaluations of the ESL Program

There appeared to be general support for the concept of an ESL program among most employees interviewed. However, there were a variety of opinions from supervisors and managers concerning the purpose, priority and effectiveness of the program in practice. Alternatively, workers in the program unanimously voiced satisfaction with the program and their progress in the program. A summary of the opinions and perceptions of various groups of employees follows. It should be noted that because of the variance in opinion by management and supervisory staff and the low numbers of workers in the program, the summary outlines managerial staff opinions and perceptions in greater detail than in other plants.

Management assessment

The plant manager was very supportive of the program. He indicated that the program would allow the company to utilize the skills and talents many of the workers possess but, because of language, have been unable to capitalize on to any great degree. He indicated that he has witnessed progress in individuals who have been in the program, but recognized that workers have few opportunities to use English because of the nature and structure of their work. The manager believed that there needed to be more levels offered and more reading and writing skills taught in order to make workers promotable in the plant hierarchy. Workers were expected to have the language skills necessary for the job prior to taking the position. Furthermore, training workers to be "problem-solvers" was considered a priority. He acknowledged that in the past there had been productivity problems; however, recently the plant began overhiring by ten percent and he no longer felt that concerns over production were sufficient justification for denying permission to attend class. According to the manager any complaints that the researchers reported in this regard were "historical rather than structural." As well, the plant manager indicated that he wished to increase the decision making power of the supervisors including decisions concerning the ESL program. However, he admitted that there was at the present time insufficient general training provided supervisors much less specific training multicultural and multilingual issues.

The line manager who was interviewed supported the ESL program saying it "cannot do anything but reap benefits for our company." However, he was of the opinion that workers did not demonstrate sufficient initiative in practicing their English on the shop floor. There appeared to be no effort made by workers to speak English on their breaks which suggested to him that they were not committed to improving their proficiency in the language. He drew a firm line at what he considered company responsibility in terms of language training. He understood the responsibility of the company was to provide oral language skills for workers. He believed this education ought to be part of in-house training. Out-of-house training would be appropriate for increasing workers' reading and writing proficiency. An important comment made by the line manager was that there was a need to "educate English-speakers about the ESL program." There were in his estimation misconceptions and confusion about the purpose of and structure of the program.

The human resources manager was in full support of the program. In her opinion the ESL program should go beyond oral language skills to reading and writing and to what she described as "job enrichment." Employees who have greater proficiency with the language feel more competent, responsible and can get more involved in "the life of this plant." They have more opportunity for advancement in the company and can speak more comfortably with supervisors and senior management. Often new workers who do not speak English are abnormally dependent on their supervisors: they "attach themselves to their supervisor" and are afraid to speak. She noted that men seem to get more involved in the plant; that women seem to be more isolated. The HR manager was of the opinion, as well, that supervisors need to encourage their workers more. She commented that it is as important to be proficient in English as it is to operate the necessary machinery, and that this needed to be communicated to the supervisors. One story related by the HR manager was of a supervior who came into an ESL class and told a student to return to shift. What stuck the HR manager was the aggressiveness of this gesture although she did not question the supervisor's right to pull a worker out of class.

Assessment by other managerial staff and salaried employees

The company nurse and human resources assistant were also very supportive of the program and indicated they had seen progress in the workers in the program. The nurse indicated that she had occassionally experienced some difficulty from supervisors when she required a worker to come off the line. The human resources assistant, who was new to her position, indicated that she had not been informing new workers of the ESL program but that she would be doing so in the furture.

Supervisor assessment

Day Shift: These supervisors were less supportive of the program than others interviewed. They recognized workers' need to be able to cope with the company, and to be conversant in the workplace but many didn't see formal language training as particularly crucial; "I can get along without it." Some indicated that workers were using the class only as a break and that they as supervisors were already doing language training informally with their workers. A great concern was the difficulty balancing lines and maintaining production with absenteeism and with ESL attendance.

Afternoon Shift: These supervisors indicated general acceptance of the program but were concerned that there was a lack of progress in the workers they sent to class. They were of the opinion that students, particularly in the last six months, were not improving. Another concern was a lack of liaison between teacher and supervisor. They had not been approached by the teacher in some time. One supervisor wanted some type of report about her workers on a regular basis. Many on this shift felt that they could communicate adequately with many of their workers already, although there were some workers who definitely needed the class. Supervisors were under the impression that the class enrolment was now at maximum and that, if class sizes were increased, they would be willing to send more workers.

Midnight Shift: The midnight shift supervisor indicated that there was a strong need for ESL training on his shift but that the current structure of the program and the option to attend during the day or afternoon classes was not viable for most of his staff. As mentioned previously he collected a list of names of individuals who would benefit from an ESL program.

Wash Supervisors: The two wash supervisors, one day and one afternoon, articulated the difficulties they experience in sending workers to class. The fact that one did send a custodial staff member to the class suggested that she, like the other wash supervisor, was in support of the program but believed she could not sacrifice an employee for even one half hour in order to attend class. With machines on various timed cycles it is difficult, according to wash supervisors, for employees to secure a definite and regular time. These supervisors help their employees with English and they believe their workers make progress because of the team approach and the necessity for communication that prevails in their section of the plant. Given the almost exclusively male workforce in this area, there were some concerns in the mind of the female supervisor concerning the propriety of the English being learned through interactions with co-workers. But it was production quota for both of these supervisors that appeared to be their major concern. They felt pressure and responsibility to the rest of the plant and to the company to meet production, which meant denying workers the opportunty to attend class.

ESL teacher assessment

The ESL teacher indicated that she enjoyed the students in her class whom she described as very motivated learners and "desperate to learn." She was satisfied with her program and her students' progress. She commented that she had received excellent support from the HR manager and management generally. She wished to develop a better relationship with supervisors and had evidently made some efforts to do so over her year of employment with the plant. The teacher expressed a desire to teach more workers than were presently enrolled and that several of her current students would benefit from second session if permission was granted for them to attend. She recognized the need for a more acceptable arrangement in terms of class time for those employees working the midnight shift.

Worker assessment

Those workers currently attending the ESL class seemed satisfied with the program and with their progress in the program. They appeared to enjoy their class and were very comfortable with their teacher. The students indicated that they wished to continue in the program, although it seemed unlikely they would be given permission to do so. Some students expressed a degree of resentment or fear in having to request daily permission from their supervisors to attend class.

Many of those interviewed who had once been in the program but were not currently enrolled also expressed the desire to resume classes. Some of those interviewed who had taken the class were of the opinion that there should be more writing in the class but most did not or could not suggest improvements in the class. The majority of those interviewed who had never been in the program said they too wished to enrol in the program. A few were not interested in taking the class. They preferred to learn informally, or perferred to spend their lunch break with their friends, relaxing. One mentioned that she had found the class too difficult. Some were already involved in private study. Those employees working midnights could not find the time during the day to attend class.

Overall, workers indicated a strong desire to improve their English in order to communicate more effectively on the job and to be more independent in Canadian society generally. One worker in the class said she felt like an "invalid" because of her lack of proficiency in English. She had to rely heavily on family, friends, co-workers and the ESL teacher. According to workers, particularly difficult and frustrating experiences with the language occurred on the job when disagreements arose with supervisors and co-workers over the quality and quantity of work and specifically over the sorting of bundles. Out of the plant, difficulties were encountered with doctors, store clerks and immigration officials. One worker said she had to wait two days before one of her family members could accompany her to the doctor's office in order to translate for her.

A few of the male workers indicated that they would be looking for work outside of the company once their English improved; however the vast majority said they would remain with the company, that they were content.

No one interviewed had heard any worker speak negatively of the program. Indeed employees rarely speak of the program at all according to several workers.

Analysis

The Brantford plant is the most complex of the three plants we investigated. The history of the plant creates a unique dynamic that has a marked effect on the operation and success of the English program.

Critical ingredients for the success of an English program within a workplace environment include the following:

1) the people who supervise the workforce should actively support the program.

2) the program should have a high profile within the plant. In other words, its purpose must be clearly defined so that employees understand how and why they can benefit from the program, and the program should be actively marketed within the plant.

3) the curriculum should be geared towards realistic language needs of learners.

We will deal with each of these issues in turn.

1) Our data suggest that the English program is in a very tenuous position at the Brantford plant. The supervisors, in particular, have very ambivalent attitudes towards the program. Most of the supervisors support the ESL program in principle, but have many concerns about how it can be integrated into the day-to-day running of the plant. A number believe that production suffers when the operators take an extra half hour at lunchtime, and many say that when an operator is absent, it is difficult to reorganize their lines to ensure smooth workflow from one section to the next.

The emphasis that supervisors place on production needs is particularly marked in Brantford as opposed to Stoney Creek or Edmonton. Although the supervisors are aware that the plant management had adopted a policy of "overhiring" so that operators can participate in non-production activities in the plant - including the ESL class - a number of supervisors still maintain that the ESL program creates undue stress for them. Some supervisors, however, are not as affected by production stress and indicate that half an hour can be absorbed over the course of the day.

A number of supervisors expressed disappointment that they do not perceive much progress in the English skills of operators attending the course, and some said that the learners are more interested in "taking a break" than in learning the language. Many of the supervisors seem unaware of the anxiety that many of the ethnic workers we interviewed feel when they are unable to express themselves adequately in English. One employee, for example, described herself as an "invalid" because her level of proficiency was limited. The non-salaried employees appear to be very vulnerable when they are in the presence of their supervisors. One manager described an occasion when an non-salaried employee was reluctant to speak to her until the supervisor had assured the worker that it was "OK" to speak to the manager.

Some supervisors questioned the need for an ESL course because they say that they are able to communicate sufficiently well with the operators to ensure that the work demands of the plant are carried out. Some supervisors indicated that they are making an effort to teach workers English, and are encouraging the workers to use English on the job as much as possible. They believe that operators should be permitted to attend the English course only until such time as the operators can make themselves understood to supervisors and instructors. English instruction in excess of this goal is considered to be outside the responsibility of Levi Strauss.

This particular position is not consistent with the views expressed by middle and senior management at the Brantford plant. The latter group indicated that the company's desire for a more flexible workforce necessitates a different perception of the non-salaried workers than has previously been the case. Managerial staff indicated that the non-salaried workforce needs to be a more integral part of plant life - a workforce that can communicate difficulties and propose solutions. The English class, according to them, has an important role to play in promoting the communicative skills of the non-salaried workers. At issue here is the fact that there is no clear company policy on the purpose and expectations of the English course. It is unclear as to who has ultimate responsibility for decisions that impact on the English course: how the course is to be marketed and conducted, who is to attend the course, what structures are to be established to facilitate communication between teacher, workers, supervisors, and management.

While our data are limited, they do indicate that there appears to be some covert resentment amongst some of the English speaking workforce towards those ethnic workers who are taking the English classes. The extent to which this resentment is shared by supervisors is unclear. One supervisor was overheard to say "Are we doing this for them again?" - "this" being the English class. On a number of occasions, managerial staff indicated that they have attempted to encourage the supervisors to play a more active role in encouraging the non-salaried workers to use the English they are learning. One said: "In my opinion, the supervisors play a key role as to the success - not just of the ESL class, but the success of the individual students in the manner in which they encourage the students to participate in the individual classes and use the language on the shop floor."

A senior manager explained that the ambivalent attitudes of some of the English speaking workforce and supervisors may be the result of a "young English female group feeling threatened" by the increasing number of ethnic non-salaried workers who have been hired over the past six to seven years. One manager said "the perception is that these people are taking advantage of a company freebie". The managerial staff believe, however, that this situation has improved. One manager indicated that tensions occasionally arise between different ethnic groups in the plant. Such conflict between employees is dealt with firmly.

It should be noted that while the supervisors at Brantford appear less supportive of the ESL program than are supervisors at other plants, they also have far greater authority than other supervisors with respect to the attendance of non-salaried workers at the ESL classes. The supervisors currently have the primary responsibility of informing the non-salaried workers about the course, decide who will take the course, and are able to deny the workers permission to attend a particular lesson should production needs dictate. Indeed, workers have to seek permission from their supervisor before going to each lesson. Because each course only runs for 17 weeks, the supervisors are regularly in a position to decide who will take the course, and whether workers can repeat the course.

The one supervisor at Brantford most in favour of an ESL program is not in a position to encourage workers to avail themselves of this service because of the timing of his shift. The supervisor on the midnight shift went to great lengths to inform us of the linguistic needs of the workers on his shift and indicated his willingness to cooperate in a program that would suit the schedules of his workforce. The instructor on the midnight shift indicated that she would be willing to run an English course if a qualified teacher was not willing to come to the plant at night. Clearly, the linguistic needs of workers on the midnight shift need to be addressed.

During the course of data gathering, we gradually became aware that there was a perception among at least two supervisors that the attendance of non-salaried workers at the ESL class might have a negative impact on the overall production levels of the plant which would cut into the company's profits. This would then deplete the annual bonuses that have recently become part of the employee incentive system within the plant.

2) The English language program has almost no presence at the plant. At the time we collected our data, the human resources department at the plant did not include details of the English language class in the workers' orientation to the plant. If, during their initial interview, workers had indicated an interest in "going to school", they would have been informed of the English program at the plant. In general, workers learn of the program from supervisors or co-workers. However, a quality control clerk as well as a number of operators indicated that workers rarely speak about the class or make reference to it in conversation.

A number of workers we interviewed had expressed interest in taking the course, but had been informed by supervisors that they were either sufficiently competent in

English for the requirements of the job, or that other workers were in greater need of the course than they were. Other workers had not mentioned their interest to supervisors because they believed it was inappropriate for them to do so.

Because the history and structure of the English program at Brantford is different from that of the English programs at both Stoney Creek and Edmonton, the employees who were attending the program when we collected data had not been in the course for a long time. In addition, some had not attended classes on a regular basis because their supervisors had not given them the necessary permission to leave the floor on occasion. This situation, however, seems to be improving. We also found that the operators enrolled in the course had extremely limited English skills and it was difficult for them to articulate their views of the course. On the whole, we were left with the impression that the operators enjoyed the course very much and were slowly gaining greater confidence as they developed their English skills.

The current position of the English program at Brantford seems very different from its position two years ago when the first course was instituted. According to a report drawn up by the ESL instructor in 1988, the program had as many as 40 workers enrolled.

3) The strength of the English language program at Brantford is that a curriculum has been carefully drawn up to incorporate English skills that Levi Strauss employees might find useful both in their work environment and in their domestic environments. The teacher is employed directly by Levi Strauss and accountable to the company rather than to an external agency. She is paid for extra time that is spent at the plant for meetings. The teacher has great respect for her students and invites class participation through an imaginative, student-centred methodology.

The teacher recognizes the importance of maintaining an ongoing relationship with supervisors and management and securing their support for the program and the curricular objectives of the course. It appears she has been more active than her predecessor in her attempts to encourage supervisors to support the English program at the plant. As a result of a meeting between the teacher and the supervisors, the times of two of the English classes were permanently changed to accommodate production schedules. Nevertheless, relations between the teacher and some supervisors appear somewhat strained and there has been limited contact between the teacher and the supervisors over the last few months. The teacher indicated that she is eager to have more students in each class. She says that the five students she currently teaches in each class would not be adversely affected by the presence of more students.

The teacher is aware that the supervisors are disappointed that they see only limited improvement in the English skills of the workers who attend the English classes. The teacher attributes this attitude partly to the unrealistically high expectations of the supervisors and partly to a lack of confidence amongst the ethnic workers in their dealings with supervisors and other English speakers in the plant. One of the English speaking non-salaried workers we interviewed told us that an ethnic worker had given her a box of chocolates simply because she had been friendly to that worker. The ethnic worker had indicated that no English speaker had ever taken the time to talk to her before. This particular English speaking worker indicated that other English speakers in the plant find her friendly attitude towards ethnic workers a little disturbing. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult for supervisors to find much evidence of increased proficiency in English amongst the non-salaried workers in the English classes.

THE EDMONTON PLANT

Introduction: The Research

The Edmonton plant was the third and final site investigated for the Levi Strauss project. Research at the plant began on Monday March 26th and continued until the end of the week, Friday March 30th. During this time one member of the OISE research team interviewed various employees, participated in ESL classes, observed plant operations, and collected pertinent documents. Specifically, this researcher interviewed, individually, the plant manager, the assistant manager, the training manager, two line managers, two supervisors, the co-ordinator and the director of the ESL program, the Human Resource assistant and thirty hourly or piecework employees. The majority of these thirty workers were sewing machine or steam press operators, although some were quality control clerks, audit clerks, some were lead hands (sewing machine operators designated to manage the line during a supervisor's absence), and one was a cutter. Of the total number of workers interviewed thirteen were currently attending the company's ESL classes, eleven had at one time attended and six had never been enrolled in the program. In addition to the individual interviews, the researcher conducted group interviews with the ESL teachers, the supervisors and four separate ESL classes. The researcher sat in on four ESL classes, toured the plant, held informal discussions with various employees and generally observed the "culture" of the factory. The reseacher also collected documents relating to the ESL program, teaching materials, evaluations and a variety of plant information sheets made available to employees.

Although the data were collected by only one researcher, the analysis was done collectively by the research team and preliminary descriptions and analysis were shared with the Edmonton plant and ESL co-ordinator. But of course, the research team takes full responsiblity for this report.

The Plant

The Site and Operation

The Edmonton plant is primarily a sewing facility similar in operation to the plant at Stoney Creek. Although some pressing and finishing is conducted, by and large, garments are cut and sewn in the plant and then sent either to the finishing plant at Brantford or to local contractors for final processing. Like Stoney Creek, the plant operates a single shift, Monday to Thursday 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Unlike Stoney Creek, the Edmonton plant is one of the few sewing factories in the city; indeed in the province. It is also the only Levi Strauss plant in Canada located outside of Ontario. This is due in part because the Edmonton plant is not an initial holding of the Levi Strauss Company. Originally the plant was owned and operated by GWG and it is only relatively recently that Levi Strauss acquired control of the plant and its operations. But having been associated with the city for nearly 80 years, the facility is still referred to as the GWG plant by long-time residents of Edmonton, an association strengthened by the decision of Levi Strauss & Company to continue the GWG product line and label.

The plant itself is a large, low building shadowed on one side by the Edmonton Stadium and on the other by apartment blocks on Jasper Avenue. Close to downtown, the plant receives regular public transit service. Recently renovated, the plant can be divided, for research purposes, into three sections: the factory floor and warehouse, the cafeteria, and the executive office area. The factory floor is a large, open, windowless warehouse space, dusty (despite the constant and visible efforts of the custodial staff), and crowded; pathways through the piles of denim and numerous machines, and difficult to discern. The main factory space is primarily a sewing area but, off to one end of the factory, almost separated from the rest of the plant, is the cutting and spreading room and at the opposite end a small pressing and packing area. The workspace of the operators and supervisors is crowded and, unlike the secretarial workspace, unadorned by personal momentos, or by company motivational and promotional materials. Unlike other plants investigated in this project, and with the exception of a few company posters, President club flags, percentage flags and markers, production graphs and other company production quota materials were not visible anywhere in the factory area or indeed anywhere in the plant. What was different as well was that the factory area of this plant was noticeably quieter than in other sites. While line operators and supervisors wore safety glasses and, because of the dust, some wore masks, ear plugs were unnecessary. It was still noisy, but conversation was easier here than at other plants. However, like in other Levi Strauss plants, the nature and structure of the operation is such that very little conversation actually takes place in the factory area other than at the beginning and end of shifts and breaks.

The situation in the cafeteria is quite different. A large, bright room, the cafeteria is noisy at breaks and at lunch with the sounds of "coffee-talk" in a multitude of languages from various groups of workers. In the cafeteria employees evidently sort themselves out according to language group and along gender and occupational lines. Female Cantonese speakers from one line, for example, sat at various tables together, Punjabi and Hindi speakers at other tables, English speakers grouped together at still other tables etc. Supervisors tended to sit together. Managers and most of the secretarial staff were not often seen in the cafeteria at least during the week the research was conducted.

The third section of the plant for purposes of this research project might be designated the executive wing. It consists of the offices of the managers, line supervisors, and the secretarial and payrole staff, as well as the boardroom, and the staff lounge and washrooms. This section of the plant was wood panelled, carpeted, light and very quiet.

The managers' offices were small but had windows facing out into the street and out into the hall. Doors were generally left open. There was a separate "visitors" entrance to this section of the plant. The workers, some of the salaried staff, and researcher used the more visible "employees" entrance which lead directly to the factory floor.

The Workforce

There are 512 people employed at the plant in Edmonton. Of this number forty-five are salaried and the rest are on hourly wage or piecework. An overwhelming number of employees are women. The human resources assistant estimated that women comprise 90% of the plant's workforce. However, similar to other plants, the percentage does not hold across all job categories. Female employees are more likely to be found working as sewing machine operators, supervisors, secretaries and payrole clerks; whereas, male employees are more often cutters, spreaders, lab or computer technicians, middle or senior managers. Thus, although no white chalk lines are drawn, women's workspace might be considered the open factory and general office areas; men's workspace generally individual offices, small labs or the partially enclosed area of the cutting room.

The overall ethnic composition of the plant is estimated to be sixty percent Oriental (Chinese, Vietnamese, Fijian, Loatian), seventeen percent East Indian, twelve percent Polish, Hungarian, Yugosavian, and Italian, five percent native born Canadians and less than one percent Latin Americans. The researcher and ESL teachers thought the percentage of Oriental people in the plant to be much higher than number indicated. This perception may be due in part because visible minorities like the Chinese dominate in the factory area and it is there where the majority of students for ESL classes and the majority of interviewees for the study were drawn. As well, historically the plant has been hiring increasing numbers of Vietnamese and Chinese workers and, recently, a larger number of Polish workers, reflecting fluctuating and changing immigration trends in the city.

The length of employment of both ethnic and Canadian born workers at the Edmonton plant is unique in company and, since it affects general plant operations and the ESL program, bears some discussion. The average length of time workers have been employed at the Edmonton plant is thirteen years, but a surprising number of those interviewed had been at the plant twenty or more years. This was true not only of line workers but as well for supervisors and managers. Supervisors, for example, had between ten and thirty-two years service; managers, over ten years. Line workers, supervisors, and others in the plant, then, are generally very familiar with the company and with their work. Many of the the line workers are cross-trained in one or more operations which gives the plant a great deal of flexibility.

In interviews many employees indicated not only that they had been with the company for a lengthy time, but, also, that the plant was their first and only job in Canada. They expressed satisfaction with the company. The plant, as a result, experiences only minimal turnover and new applicants often have to apply repeatedly before being hired. The reasons cited for the lack of turnover and the basic satisfaction with the company included the lack of alternative sources of work for non-English speakers in Edmonton, the wages which, although similar to other plants, provide a reasonable standard of living in Alberta where the cost of living is less than in other provinces, and the company's treatment of its workers. The employees spoke of the progress the company had made over the years of their employment, indicating that it was a better place to work than it had ever been in the past. The company is, according to the human resources assistant, well regarded in the ethnic community. Interestingly enough, some of those who apply for work at the company know of the ESL program so it may be that the ESL program is helping to build or maintain the reputation of the Edmonton plant within the ethnic communities of Edmonton.

For many employees at the plant, English is a second or third language as many have come to Canada and to the Edmonton plant speaking little or no English. This is true not only of the line workers but as well for nearly all the supervisors and for at least one of the line managers. Almost all of the supervisors, for example, speak a second language. Some speak Cantonese or Punjabi, which is useful in communicating with some of their workers; some speak Danish, or Ukraninian for example, which because of the ethnic compositon of the plant is less practical in terms of communicating to numbers of workers. However, being a second language speaker of English may at least provide grounds for empathy with those workers struggling with English.

A recent plant census indicated that thirty-two percent of the hourly or piecework employees need translators in order to understand and participate in company meetings. About seven percent are English only speakers. Approximately sixty percent speak English as a second language with varying degrees of proficiency but do not generally require a translator.

Communications Patterns in the Plant

There are discernable patterns to the way in which language and specially English is used in the Edmonton plant. These patterns are similar in many respects to those evident at the other plants, although there are characteristics unique to the Edmonton facility. The three patterns significant to the study are structured by occupation; site; and and employee personal profile.

Occupational language patterns

One significant pattern in the plant is that the necessity and opportunity to use language, and English in particular, increases as one moves up the occupational hierarchy. For example line workers generally have fewer work-related language needs and fewer opportunities available to use English than do supervisors, who in turn, have fewer opportunites than do managers. This appears to be due to the nature and structure of the work required in each position.

For line workers the physical nature of the work is such that gestures and demonstrations make for clear communication in many cases. The use of language seems to occur on an occassional, and sporadic basis. The specific work-related language needs for line workers include explaining difficulties with their machines, or with each other; reporting work completed; participating in company meetings or committees; interacting with human resources personnel and the company nurse concerning benefits, salary, absentism and illness. Infrequently there is a necessity to fill in forms and surveys and read company or union information. In Edmonton the great familiarity the vast majority of line workers have both with their job and with the general operations of the plant means that even less job-related communication is necessary since there are fewer questions to be answered and fewer complaints that haven't already been aired. Furthermore, the social use of language is restricted by the nature and environment of the work so that in the normal operation of the factory there is not much conversation taking place, social or work-related, by line workers during their shift. The work is by and large physical and solitary, workers are separated from each other on the floor and it is somewhat noisy on the factory floor because of the operation of machines. There is not much interpersonal communication that occurs as was noted by one operator who, when asked about communication on the job, sardonically, replied, "I speak to my machine."

Often communication, when it does occur, happens not between operators but between a supervisor and her operator, or between supervisors. Since some of the supervisors share a non-English language with their operators, communication, for these employees, tends to be conducted in the non-English language common to them. For supervisors who do not share the same non-English language or the few who only speak English, communication obviously must be done in English. The English spoken, however, is in some cases unique to the plant. Since the operation of the plant is quite routine and the employees so experienced, simple non-standard, or unique English words, as well as simple gestures often suffice in establishing some rudimentary form of work-related communication. One ESL class called such communication "Levi-English." Line workers, then, do not need to communicate often on the job, and when they do they may be able to use their native language or get by using a rudimentary form of English or physical gestures. It is this very characteristic of the work that draws individuals to the plant in the first place since, as immigrants, many are not proficient in the language.

Supervisors must communicate on a daily basis with various employees in the plant, as they are the link between senior management and line workers, between plant policy and practice. They are required to write various reports (ie. accident claims) as part of their job. As a result, supervisors have greater and regular exposure to spoken and written English and are themselves required to speak and write English with senior management officials, if not with some of their operators. Supervisors in the Edmonton plant have learned to speak/write English on the job, in their community and in classes from local colleges taken prior to the establishment of the ESL company class. Because a lead hand takes on the responsiblities of the supervisor when a supervisor is absent from the floor, they also communicate more frequently and more often in English than do machine operators. They have greater practical opportunity to improve their English.

It should be noted that clerical staff whose work requires contact with line workers are also a link between English speaking management and the non-English speaking factory employees. The ability of clerical staff both to simplify English for workers who do not speak English, and to work with formal standardized written and spoken English for management needs is very important in terms of general plant communication.

Because of the nature and structure of their work, management personnel are immersed in various forms of work-related communication, all of which appears to be conducted in English. The supervisors and management communication needs include training employees, ensuring quality and quantity of production through individual and group meetings, policy development, completing necessary company forms, reports, surveys, etc. Managers' communication is both with plant employees and with head office and other plants. This communication takes the form of telephone calls, letters, and company meetings. The management personnel links company vision and policy to plant policy and indirectly to plant practice. The wide audience for these forms of communication demands a high level of proficiency in written and spoken standard English.

Language According to Work Space

In the Edmonton plant the language pattern is such that in the executive section, one is exposed to language, and to English, in written or spoken form on a continuous basis. On the factory floor, depending on one's position, language use is less necessary and exposure to standard English less likely to occur. The cafeteria area of the plant is an exception in that a great deal of conversation takes place. However, as a social rather than work setting, the cafeteria is a place where people often speak the language with which they feel most comfortable, and, as a the result, very little English is spoken. Of course English is spoken in the company's ESL classes, although the amount seems to depend on the level of the class. Observation of a few classes indicated that less English is spoken in the beginners class by students and teachers, and more English in the advanced level, as one might expect.

Language Pattern According to Worker Profile

Another pattern is evident in the operators' personal and work history with the plant. Most of the employees in the Edmonton plant are women, immigrants, and non-English speakers. There is a general profile to the way in which English factors into the lives of these employees and, although a gross simplication, this pattern or profile is useful in understanding how the ESL program may or may not enter significantly or effectively into the lives of the employees at the Edmonton plant.

From interviews taken with employees, it was apparent that, although some come to the company speaking no English whatsoever, most, depending on their country of origin, have had some English instruction in their home country or have taken one of the short English courses offered new immigrants in Canada or have learned some English in Canada without formal instruction. When they begin work at the plant some have been at home raising families, and with the children learning English in school and the husband doing so at work, they may lag far behind other family members in their proficieny and use of English. Coming to the plant, the women learn about their job and the company through translators and demonstration. They learn to cope with the language demands of the job and, since there are not many demands, they can cope without great difficulty, which is not to say that there are not moments of frustration. Disagreements over quality and quantity of work with supervisors and co-workers can be particularly difficult according to the workers interviewed.

Socially there are women at the plant that workers can speak to in their own language. At home they may have children, an extended family and a strong ethnic community to rely on for translation. They learn to get by and, unless the nature and structure of their job changes or their private or social life alters dramatically, they can cope to some degree with what they initially learn in the plant and in their daily lives in the community. As a result, their English may not improve dramatically. As the years go by and the work force at the Edmonton plant get older, the stabilty of life makes changing language patterns and habits difficult. If circumstances allow her, a worker might make conscious efforts to change this by making special efforts to learn the language and possibly be promoted. A promotion provides more opportunity to learn and practice English. If circumstances does not allow a line worker to improve her English and to be promoted, she will not, in all likelihood, make the same progress in the language despite being at the plant for the same number of years as those who become supervisors or managers. Because of her limited English language, a worker will be less actively involved in the company, less able to participate on company task forces and social committees, less able to play a part in the decisions being made about production or about company policy, even when the company is actively seeking and encouraging such participation. Furthermore the employee is less able to address her specific job-related concerns to company officials (ie. quality control clerks, supervisors, company nurse, etc.).

Although there were variations on these general patterns, this profile seemed to hold for many of the employees: gender, and social and cultural relations and occupational conditions can make progress in the language a difficult and slow process. This prevents or at least interferes with the ability of an employee to actively participate in the culture of the plant, in the life of the company.

The ESL Program

Although several attempts were made by the Edmonton plant to establish a English class for employees, the first sustained and succcessful program began in 1987 when Virginia Sauvé was approached by Levi Strauss to organize an English program in the Edmonton plant. Ms. Sauvé, a specialist in ESL programs, has extensive academic and practical experience and she along with her staff have continued to provide and promote the program. Ms. Sauvé and her company, English Language Professionals, organize, manage and teach several workplace ESL programs with a number of firms including the Levi Strauss Company.

The language program offered at the Edmonton plant is extensive in comparison with the programs at the Stoney Creek and Brantford plants. The Edmonton program has 143 students currently in attendance, thirteen classes, fourteen teachers, and an operating budget of nearly a quarter of a million dollars. Initially the program began with over 160 students the majority of whom were line operators although a few supervisors also attended. Of the 143 students currently in the program, all are line workers. The vast majority are women and many of them speak Cantonese as their first language. There are other ethnic groups represented in the classes and as well an occational male finds his way into the program. According to records kept by the teachers, attendance runs at ninety-two percent.

There are two streams offerred in the program: a literacy stream for students who are not able to read and write in their first language and so require special learning assistance, and a basic stream for students who have received formal schooling in their own language. In each stream there are four levels. Students contact the human resource assistant if they wish to enrol in the class. Generally they have heard about the program from the human resource assistant, their instructor and/or their fellow workers. They are then assessed by the director of the program and placed in the appropriate stream and level. Progress is evaluated in formal examinations given at the end of each phase. In contrast to other plants, supervisors in Edmonton have no say in which employees enter the program or the length of their time in the program. This decision rests entirely with the worker and the director and/or co-ordinator of the program. All students are tested prior to beginning each semester and at the end so that evidence of progress is available to the teacher, the company and, presumably, the student.

Although test results indicate students are clearly making progress, an interesting phenomenon is that while individual students do progress, they are often reluctant to leave their classmates behind if there are variances in results in a class. Consequently, classes tend to progress rather than individuals. Those students currently at the level four of the basic stream, the highest level offered, do not wish to leave the program. Indeed their desire to improve their English is so great they have indicated they might sabotage their examination marks in order to remain in the program. These students are not yet capable of operating at a grade ten English grade level, according to current standards, so are not yet prepared for advanced adult or community college classes.

There are thirteen classes currently operating at the plant. These classes are run at various times but always after work hours. Classes are offered Monday to Thursday from approximately 4:15 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., another set is offered Fridays 1:15 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.; and another set is offered Fridays 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. and Saturdays 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Phases or semesters last twelve to fourteen weeks. The program has been so far been providing three phases a year.

The classes are held in the cafeteria, in the boardroom, staff lounge and in the executive offices in the plant. Particularly in the small offices students are crowded and do not have desk space of any kind but often prefer the offices to the cafeteria. Furthermore, when asked if they wished to split the class the researcher was astonished to hear that students preferred to be crowded into one class and so be together with their original classmates.

There are fourteen teachers and a translator hired by English Language Professionals for the current phase of the program. They are selected by the co-ordinator and director for their dedication, loyalty, enthusiasm, their willingness to learn and their multicultural and ESL experience. Not all of the teachers have formal teaching credentials. The co-ordinator ensures that there are various professional development opportunities available to teachers during the year. Substitute teachers also are arranged for by the co-ordinator and director of English Language Professionals.

The curriculum and philosphy of the program is outlined in various evaluation documents provided by Ms. Sauvé and her company. The curriculum is described as emergent; that is, it arises from the daily needs/interests of the students in the class. Students are expected to bring in work-related or other materials with which they are experiencing difficulty. On such occasions teacher-made plans are laid aside. There is also an effort to bring life experience into the classroom. The presence of a researcher-observer in the classroom and in the plant becomes the basis of a lesson, for example.

A formal curriculum document has been developed by English Language Professionals for their teachers. This curriculum has emerged over the three years the program has been in operation and now is formally written up. The document provides teachers with some specific direction with regard to how materials may be taken up and the types of language knowledge/practice expected to the conferred. There appears to be an attempt to provide flexiblity but as well to ensure some degree of continuity and conformity in the types of language experiences each level and stream provide. Specific articulation of the general curriculum is left to the teacher and students. Unlike in other plants, the classes occassionally meet outside of classtime for various social outings. Tours and dinners and concerts were arranged for students outside of classtime to broaden their experience in the community and with the language. For example, classes have gone on tours of the Muttart conservatory, the metro library, and in one instance to a class member's restaurant.

The ESL program in Edmonton differs from that at other plants in that the workers are financially compensated for their attendance in the program in addition to the wages they earn in regular work hours. Although employees who attend other forms of upgrading are reimbursed tuition, workers in the on-site ESL program are paid both tuition and time. Each student receives a maximum of $300.00 per term for the time they spend in ESL classes. If a student misses more than four classes a percentage is taken off their stipend. The plant supplies juice for students as well.

Employee Perceptions and Evaluation of the ESL Program

There was unanimous support for the ESL program among all employees interviewed at the Edmonton plant. No one suggested even remotely that the program should be discontinued. There were, however, differences in the goals, philosophy, assessement and issues raised by various employees concerning the program. These perceptions and evaluations are summarized below.

Management assessment

The plant manager describe the ESL program as "an investment rather than an expense," a worthwhile investment in the employees of the plant for the company. The benefits of the program as he saw it included increasing goodwill of employees and the community; increasing workers' confidence; and securing a firmer means for the company to communicate its policy (ie. MMV) to workers. He has noticed more employees attempting to speak English to him and felt the ESL program was in part responsible for this change. Concerns about the program focused on securing more government funding for the program, graduating students through the program, and providing alternative classes for students not making progress.

The plant manager saw the compensation of workers for class time and tuition in the ESL program as a nonissue. He suggested that the money was insufficient incentive for those individuals who might consider taking the course for the stipend only. As he saw it, the company had a responsibilty to support the ESL program because of the benefits accrued are greater than those from more advanced, off-site programs other employees might be enrolled in; therefore, time as well as tuition should be paid for by the company for the on-site ESL program and only tuition for those taking other courses. It was the opinion of the plant manger that the program should provide basic language training until such time as the student reached a level where she/he could enter and successfully cope in a community language program.

Other management personnel (line managers, training manager etc.) indicated that the ESL program was developing what they perceived as more confident, more satisfied workers. Increasing production was not considered an important factor in terms of the ESL classes. Issues raised by the management personel concerned the lack of progress of students who had been in the program for some time and the use of non-English languages during, before, and after the ESL classes. One manager admitted that the compensation given workers attending classes was an issue for him when the program initially began. However when the attendance continued during one phase when the stipend was in jeopardy of being reduced or discontinued entirely, he became convinced that the students were genuinely interested in improving their English and not simply there for the money. And he, like the others, is now supportive of the ESL program.

Supervisor assessment

Supervisors indicated that some of their workers were making good progress. Because of the program these workers were developing greater self-esteem and some seemed to understand and speak English more often. And, according to the supervisors, their workers greatly enjoyed the classes. However, supervisors voiced serious concerns over the lack of progress being made by some of the workers. They suggested that some workers seem to show no initiative, making little attempt to practice their English. Some in the program, the supervisors suggested, were perhaps too old or only interested in the money that attendance in the program secured. According to the supervisors, some of their workers, even those who have been in the program since its inception, still required a great deal of help with what the supervisors thought were simple language tasks such as filling in forms.

Some of the supervisors were unaware of the structure and nature of the ESL program and of whom among their workers were currently in the class. At least two of the supervisors spoke of the demands made on them by their workers and that difficult workers who learn English might become even more difficult to work with. Several of the supervisors were concerned that their own English, which for many of the supervisors is a second language, is deteriorating because of the "broken English" they hear and are at times required to speak in order to communicate to workers not proficient in the language. It should be noted that several of the supervisors had been in the ESL program initially but stopped attending. Although wishing to improve their English, they found the classes not advanced enough for their purposes. They suggested there should be more levels offerred in the program.

One significant ESL event that the supervisors felt compelled to relate to the researcher during the group interview was a Christmas tea put on the ESL teachers and students. Supervisors were given personal, handwritten invitations in English from their workers and were evidently deeply touched by the gesture judging from the warm expression with which they described the event.

ESL program adminstrator assessment

In an interview the co-ordinator and teacher-director of the ESL program described the "great generosity of spirit" shown by the company with regard to the ESL program in allowing them the freedom and support to create a successful program. Success in terms of observable language improvement was evident in the statistical data from pre- and post-tests carried out on the students. However, the ESL adminstrators placed more emphasis on the need and right of workers to learn the general cultural and linguistic resources needed to cope within Canadian society and as well, the social need of workers in what can be an alienating and competitive environment. The administrators described the ESL program as "Women's Education" and as "Settlement Education." The concerns and issues they have about the program include their desire to improve the program through greater innovation in the structure and nature of the learning experience, for example, increasing the number of hours offered per week so students are given at least six hours of instruction, ensuring an open ended program with no cutoff or graduation date, and increasing contact with supervisors.

Teacher assessment

The teachers indicated great satisfaction with the program and with their involvement with English Language Professionals. They suggested that much of the success of the ESL program was due to the excellent leadership of the English Language Professionals administration and on the supportive and accommodating management at the Edmonton plant. They described a great cohensiveness among the teaching staff and expressed both respect and affection for their students.

Teachers indicated they were doing much more record keeping now than they had to in the past and that there was greater concern about meeting curriculum demands than in the past. Other concerns expressed by the teachers included how to increase amount of contact they have with supervisors and other company officials, and the fatigue their students experienced at the end of the day which affected students' ability to learn.

One teacher indicated that the progress her students made may not necessarily be observable to company officials. For her students, who were in the lowest level of learners not literate in their mother tongue, experiences such as writing out their own cheques and going to the library for tne first time were not going to dramatically nor instantaneously improve their oral language at the plant. The goals at this level were seen as different from those in other streams and other levels. One teacher mentioned that she sometimes felt left out because a non-English language was used by many of her students. She understood that this was enevitable and necessary, as was a translator for the level of her class.

With respect to the program as workplace based, teachers indicated that students were to bring in work materials to use as a basis for language learning in the class to promote work related language learning. Howqever, the work site location was more important in that it created greater bonding among the students and provided greater security in that the site was one in which the students, not the teacher, were familiar. According to the teachers workplace ESL referred not to the program as much as it did to the location of the classes.

Employee assessment

Those currently attending class

Those students interviewed who were currently enrolled in the company's ESL program describe their experience in class as both positive and useful. Students could not, even when pressed, suggest changes they might want to see in the nature or structure of the program. They seemed quite satisfied with the English classes and felt the program was meeting their needs. The reasons students expressed for their enrolment in the class focussed on improving work-related communication, personal business communication and social conversation. In terms of work-related communication, students indicated that they wished to improve their English in order to speak more effectively with their supervisor, the company mechanic, the nurse and human resource personnel. With regard to personal business communication students spoke of improving their ability to communicate with doctors, bank tellers, store clerks, lawyers, and immigration officials. Some of the older women indicated a desire to understand and speak with their children who, having been raised in this country, spoke English more often than their parents' native language. Speaking to family members and also to neighbours figured in the students' reasons for enroling in the class. Some of the workers indicated that they wished to improve their

English so that they might advance in the company. No one spoke of seeking a better job with another employer. Generally workers spoke of becoming more independent, not relying on company translators or on family or friends, and indicated a strong desire to speak English because they are "in Canada now."

Students seemed generally pleased with their progress. Several mentioned that they could understand company letters and memos now; pleased they could now read more than the date. Many said they were more confident than they had been prior to entering the program. Difficulties students experienced in class they blamed on their own inadequacies as learners. Remembering material from their lessons was a problem mentioned by several students.

When asked if they spoke more English, many indicated that they did not speak English socially since their friends at the plant become angry, thinking they were showing off or attempting to frustrate them, and on the job "Levi-English," one word answers or gestures, were sufficient, and a habit well ingrained.

Students described the time and location as convenient. All spoke highly of their instructors. They enjoyed their classes and classmates and, despite the large numbers of students in of some of the classes, did not wish to have classes split. They said they were comfortable with their classmates, "like a big family," and were not embarrassed if they made a mistake. One women said of this, "I feel safety here."

Students wished the program to continue and some stated that they would pay for the teacher, and the time themselves, if they had to, to ensure that the program continued. A few students said they had heard that some students only attended the program for the stipend, however, with one exception, no one interviewed thought anyone in their class was attending only for that reason.

Those once in the class

There were eleven workers interviewed who had been in the program but were now not attending. These workers were generally not unhappy with the instruction they had received. Many indicated they simply did not have the time, were too tired at the end of the day, or were managing adequately with what they had learned. Several indicated that they wanted more writing than was taught; one former student said that she felt left out of the class since Cantonese was spoken socially in the class and she was not a Cantonese speaker; one former student indicated that there was too much social talk in Cantonese and it distracted her from the lessons. Several said they were learning enough from their kids and the television. Children's shows were described as very useful in language learning.

Those never in the class

The six workers who had never been enrolled in the program expressed no animosity or fear towards the program, teachers or students. One long time male employee indicated that he simply felt no particular compulsion to attend the class. He was able to function on the job and at home adequately although he experienced some difficulty speaking with his children. He also wished to be available for overtime. The female employees spoke of the demands of young families, and the desire to spend time with their children. An older worker, nearing retirement, felt that she was just too old. She relied on children to translate for her when necessary. Several of the women also mentioned the difficulty of arranging rides home and of personal safety attempting to get home on dark, cold winter evenings. One young East Indian woman said that her father and brothers would suffer repercussions from the East Indian community if she was harmed or assaulted. Her family's reputation was at risk, as she herself was, though this was not mentioned, in a city and culture that was unfamiliar and potentially dangerous to her.

Others

In discussions and interviews with other employees in the plant, the clerical staff, company nurse, human resources assistant, there was agreement that the ESL program was worthwhile and improvement had been noted. The nurse commented that more phone calls concerning absence from work due to illnesses were made by the workers themselves rather than through a bilingual family member. The necessity to use translators appears to be declining. The human resourse assistant indicated that in at least one individual's case the employee could now make better use of the benefit package which, though always available, had not been understood before and therefore claims were not incurred. The concern over compensation to workers for in-class time was again raised by one of these employees. Although it was felt tuition should be paid for, the opinion expressed was that paying workers for their time in the ESL class was unjust since other employees enrolled in off-site programs were not given similar compensation for their time.

Analysis

The success of the Edmonton ESL program is evident in the general support for the idea of such a program among all employees in the plant and in the general support given for the currrent structure and nature of the program itself. The high number of students enrolled and high attendance rate indicate that workers needs are being met by the program. In the opinion of the research team the success of the program is due at least in part to the following:

1) the nature and design of the program

2) the continued promotion of the program by English Language Professionals, in particular Ms. Sauvé, and the professional attitude she takes to all aspects of the program

3) the support provided by the plant manager and his administrative staff

4) the commitment of the ESL teachers and students.

1) Nature and Design of the Program

The time and location is convenient for many of women in the plant so that they can easily avail themselves of the classes. Women with older children, many in the plant, do not need to hurry home to attend to childcare or other immediate domestic duties. Workers do not have to make arrangements for a separate trip later in the evening to a location they are less familiar with in order to take classes. Thus, although they are tired, for most, it is a better option than an evening class at some other location and time. Furthermore there are a variety of class times available for workers to choose, so there is greater possiblity of fitting one's own personal agenda in with the ESL classes.

The location of classes is pleasant, comfortable, and relaxing. Workers have the chance to be in the executive or cafeteria section of the plant. It is an environment with which they are familar and where the teacher rather than the student is the outsider.

Most importantly the program design meets the social and academic needs of many of the workers. As new Canadians or as immigrants who have been in the country for some time, there is a clear desire in the employees to improve their English, and the convenience and social nature of the learning allows that to happen. The solitary nature of their work makes attractive the chance to improve one's English with one's friends in a situation where their native language is socially bonding and the fear of sounding foolish in English unintimidating. This factor is probably important in accounting for the large enrolment in the program.

The curriculum allows students to bring in personal and work-related materials, issues, and questions for support and to form the basis of lessons. This builds cohesion among class members as well as providing relevant lessons. For example, vacation and family photos, stories and myths from their own culture, and articles from English books and newspapers become the basis of the class.

However, the nature and design of the program is not unproblematic for everyone in the plant. One question raised in some form on numerous occassions during the research concerned the stipend given workers at this plant. Specifically the question raised was whether workers were attending class only for the money. From the data collected in our study it was evident that for those students currently in the program the money appeared inconsequential.

Another issue raised was whether the social nature of the classes was dominating the practical purposes of the class. The question was whether the program was in reality a social club where one happens to learn English or a place to learn English in a supportive social atmosphere. More generally there seemed to be some confusion as to the specific mandate of the program. There seemed to be contradictory views offered in some of the comments made by teachers, workers, management and supervisors. Management suggested the class was to serve as preparation for further language education at community colleges and adult upgrading facilites; supervisors indicated that the lessons should result in greater competancy in oral work-related communication; teachers wanted to improve the overall quality of workers personal and work lives; students wanted to fit into Canadian society, etc. Any good language program should contain aspects of all these views. However, in policy decisions one vision may need to dominate the others. Without a clearly defined philosophy, carefully articulated in practice, there will continue to be confusion in the plant concerning the goals and objectives of the language program. Issues and disatisfaction may arise as a result of differing expectations. For example, if an employee believes that the program should concentrate on students' oral work-related communication, any evidence of a lack of linguistic progress raises the question of compensation and the social atmosphere of the learning site, and questions concerning the amount of English being spoken during class and students' general initiative. Viewed as preparation for further education, graduation from the company's program would be expected, as would close ties between the company's ESL program and the programs at higher educational institutions.

It is the opinion of the researchers that a multitude of needs and purposes being met by the classes. Among other things there are language lessons learned, there are social needs being met, and there is an interaction between the two that results in superior learning experiences. Learners come from many backgrounds affecting their language learning in ways in which may not be apparent on the surface. Also, different life circumstances affect needs and goals for integration. What seems to be needed is a company policy sensitive to this interaction that clearly outlines the mandate of the program. Furthermore the mandate needs to be communicated to all employees. There may continue to be disagreements concerning the mandate but false or unrealistic expectations of the program will in all likelihood be less of a problem in the plant.

2) The Continued Promotion of the Program by English Language Professionals

Ms. Sauvé's commitment to the students and to her company means that she is continually improving the program offerred at the plant. Accountability is important to her so that evaluation reports both in objective and subjective forms are available to Levi Strauss. She is in close communication with the plant manager concerning the program. The program is well planned, well organized and thoroughly professional in the opinion of the researchers.

However, while there is liaison between plant management, ESL administration staff and the teachers, the relationship between supervisors, and line managers and the ESL staff seems tenuous. This is seen as a problem by teachers and the ESL administration. The structure of the program at the Edmonton plant is such that the supervisors' role is diminshed in comparison with other plants. For example, unlike the situation at other plants, supervisors have no say in who attends the program. Decisions concerning placement are made exclusively by the ESL staff and, considering their experience and training, they would seem the most suitable people to do this. Since classes take place after shift, attendance does not affect the supervisors' work, with one exception. Supervisors were for a time allowed to keep students back from class to work overtime in order to meet quota; however, this option was recently revoked. Furthermore, it is the workers' responsibility to bring in company materials into classes so that supervisors appear to have very little direct input into the lessons in this regard. Not surprisingly, supervisors and company trainers do not see themselves as language teachers. Attempts to include them in meetings with ESL teachers would seen by some of the supervisors to be unnecessary.

Part of the difficulty again comes down to a question of the philosophy for the program. If the meaning of "workplace" in Workplace ESL program refers primarily to the location of the classes and to the potential bonding of employees in a common work background, there is no pressing need to have supervisors more involved in the program than they currently are. However, if "Workplace" ESL refers primarily to language needs required by the workers in the company, the active support of supervisors becomes more significant. Supervisors, in order to support the program, need to understand how they can provide input into the program and to see the ESL program and their own work in the factory as aligned more closely. Promotion of the program and the reinforcement of classs lessons in the plant at this level would be important.

Depending on the philosophy of the ESL program, students can and should do much to promote the program to their supervisors and to other employees and should be encouraged to do so as part of their responsiblities as a participants in the program. Informally sharing with their supervisors and other employees the lessons they are learning might be greatly encouraged. Perhaps a bulletin board or regular column in the the plant's newletter describing class experiences might be considered. One example noted by the supervisors where such sharing occurred was when personally written invitations in English to a Christmas tea were sent to supervisors. It was a kind gesture but as well provided supervisors with an indication of the students' progress and the nature of their lessons. Another example was when students taped English words onto their machines in order to memorize them while they were working. Inadvertently this action provided the supervisors with some indication of the workers' lessons as well as a demonstration of workers' initiative. Of course in terms of showing initiative, students need to be given the confidence to speak English as much and as often as they can to their supervisors to improve their English and as a means to promote the ESL program.

3) Supportive Plant Management, and 4) Committed Teachers

The success of the Edmonton plant is built too on the supportive plant managerial staff and the commitment of the ESL teachers. The plant's managerial staff speak highly of the program. They willingly vacate their offices in order to provide classroom space. They encourage the workers. The ESL teachers are highly professional and commited individuals. They show up early to speak to supervisors and students. Lessons appear well planned yet flexible to the demands of the students. The teachers attend professional development meetings and seem to be genuinely concerned about their students' welfare both in and out of class.

Conclusions

The Edmonton plant operates a successful ESL program. There is a high level of support for the concept of a company-sponsored, on-site ESL program and general support for the current design and structure of the program now in operation. The vast majority of employees are very satisfied with the program. The attendance rate and large enrolment speak well of the program. At the company and plant level what is needed to strenghten the program is a general statement and/or policy that clearly defines the vision, and the mission, of the ESL program and the strong promotion of this vision. This will serve to direct program initiatives as well as resolve some of the difficulties arising from currently conflicting conceptions of what the program should or is doing. Other than that, the Edmonton program is, in the opinion of the researchers, the flagship of ESL training in this company.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this section we will go over the data obtained in this study from several perspectives. First we will provide an overview and comparison of the analyses of the data from the three plants. Next we will discuss the analyses in light of the three focusses (workers' choices about taking part in the program, impact of classes on participants, and impact on other stakeholders) that were described in the objective for this study. Then the questions developed by the plant managers for this study will be categorized and discussed in light of our findings. Finally we will make some general suggestions about areas in which action might be taken. This approach to the organization of the discussion will mean that a number of points will come up several times.

Overview and Comparisons between the Three Plants

In order to draw together the detailed discussion of each of the three plants, we offer a comparison of the three sites, starting with demographic information about the labourforce and the participation in the classes and then moving to further discussion about operations in the plants, details about the classes, access to classes, and so on. Similarities and differences will be noted along with any interpretations we might have. We will also outline the factors related to the ESL program that we found to be common to all plants.

Demographics of the Plants Related to Participation in ESL Classes

The total workforce at the three plants at the time of our study was approximately 370 at Stoney Creek, 478 at Brantford, and 512 at Edmonton. Rough percentages of non-Canadian born employees were given to us as 60 per cent at Stoney Creek, 50 per cent at Brantford, and 95 per cent at Edmonton. Approximate numbers of participants in the ESL classes at the plants were 40 at Stoney Creek, 20 at Brantford, and 143 at Edmonton. The following **percentages of non-Canadian employees engaged in ESL classes** indicate considerable differences among the three plants: Stoney Creek 18 per cent; Brantford 8 per cent; and Edmonton 29 per cent. However, these percentages must be interpreted in light of a number of factors. First, not all non-Canadian born workers need or want English language training for a variety of reasons. A precise assessment of this requirement for language training is time-consuming and difficult and not within the scope of this study although some information of this sort is reported in the section on the Edmonton plant. However, considerations of this factor will be discussed further in the description below of the characteristics of the labourforce in the three plants. Secondly, the differences among the plants might have to do with aspects of access to the classes, a subject considered separately below. Finally, the differences might relate to the quality of the classes themselves, again a subject addressed under its own heading below.

The labourforces of the three plants exhibit some differences. While some employees of the Stoney Creek plant have been there for more than ten years, there is some turnover in staff with the result that the plant has to conduct a fair amount of training of new employees, and that the non-Canadian born population is relatively young and new at the job. This group is quite ethnically varied and inclined to be composed of recently arrived immigrants. Thus, the need for English language training is likely to be quite high for the non-Canadian born group. Also, since most of these employees are young women, they will probably have significant family responsibilities outside of their work hours. This factor influences the hours that workers might be available to take English classes (i.e. not outside of regular working hours). Supervisors at Stoney Creek tend to be representative of the ethnic composition of the lineworkers. This means that many supervisors can communicate with operators in their own languages although lines tend to be of mixed ethnicity.

The Brantford plant appears to have experienced a shift in the past decade from a primarily Canadian born workforce to one with a considerable proportion of immigrant workers. These workers come from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Because of the plant's policies on assigning workers to shifts, the non-Canadian born workers are most concentrated in the night shift, and, to a lesser extent, in the afternoon shift. The fact that there is no ESL class available during the midnight shift may contribute to the low percentage of non-Canadian born in the classes at that plant. This plant employs slightly more men immigrant workers than the other plants. Therefore, considerations of childcare responsibilities in scheduling language classes might play a lesser role (not to make ethnic/gender stereotypes too prominent). The supervisors tend to be Canadian born English speakers, and the lines are mixed ethnically. The night shift supervisor speaks several languages in common with his workers.

In the Edmonton plant, the immigrant workforce generally has much more seniority than that in the other two plants. Also, the ethnic composition of the plant is primarily Asian. These workers are much more established in their jobs and in their lives in Canada, but that does not mean that their ten or more years of experience in Canada has resulted in much English language learning either on the job or in their community contacts. However, since most of the women are older, with established families, their restrictions regarding attending ESL classes outside of working hours are generally not as great as those on the young working mothers at Stoney Creek, for example. While many of their supervisors are not Canadian born, many of them are Europeans who, although they are not native speakers of English, do not share common languages with the predominantly Asian-born workforce.

Plant Operations

The Stoney Creek and Edmonton plants have much in common both in the sewing work done in the plants and the fact that they have only one shift. Most of the jobs in the Brantford plant differ from those in the other two plants and there are three shifts. These differences among the plants do not seem to have much impact on the ESL classes.

Access to ESL Classes

At Stoney Creek, access to ESL classes is negotiated between the workers, the human resources personnel, and the supervisors. Workers are informed about the classes in their orientation to the plant by the human resources personnel and supervisors play an important role in encouraging workers to attend. In the past there were a few occasions on which individual workers were asked not to attend class on a specific day because of production needs on the line, but this seems to have been rare. Workers can remain in the classes for as long as they would like.

In Brantford, information about the classes available to workers comes from supervisors and co-workers. The profile of the program is not high. It is supervisors who decide which workers can enrol in each seventeen week session of classes. Usually only one or two workers from each line are enrolled. Workers must ask each class day if they can attend, but permission has rarely been withheld in recent months. When workers ask to take a second session, supervisors often refuse permission on the grounds that others should be allowed the chance to go. There seems to be some misunderstanding between the supervisors and the teacher since the teacher says that she could accommodate more students than she currently has in each class. The only person from the wash section of the plant who was given permission to take the classes was a member of the custodial staff. The wash supervisors feel that the production demands of that section are such that it is difficult for workers to be released at a specific time. Also, the workers are all men and their language might not be proper for a mixed group, according to the supervisors. The workers in the wash section operate as a team, and there is a considerable amount of language learning on the job because of this arrangement. The night shift workers have no language class on their shift. They have been offered the opportunity to attend any of the classes in the other shifts but have not attended.

In Edmonton, access to classes is arranged by the human resources personnel and the company that provides the classes. To our knowledge no learner is refused access. Supervisors are not involved because the classes are offered outside of work hours.

Attendance at classes relates to production in the Stoney Creek and Brantford plants because workers leave their lines for a half an hour of work time for each class.

Supervisors at Brantford saw this as somewhat of a problem for them, but management generally did not. There are few men in any of the classes. While this is reasonable given the predominantly female workforce, we also wonder if at least some men might feel unconfortable studying in virtually all female classes. Also, there are no supervisors in any of the classes at present, although there were some in Edmonton earlier in the program. Again, this is understandable since supervisors must be able to speak English quite fluently in order to get that job, but they also might feel uncomfortable studying alongside their workers.

Schedule of the Classes

At Stoney Creek and Brantford, workers can attend three one hour classes each week. Half an hour of each class is the workers' lunch break. While some class time is lost while the workers buy their lunch in the cafeteria, this arrangement seems to work well since those who attend do not have to take time away from their other responsibilities outside of work hours. In Edmonton, all the classes are offered outside of work hours, after work or even on Saturdays. Given the high rate of enrolment and attendance, this arrangement seems to be satisfactory. It is our understanding that one reason why workers at the Edmonton plant are prepared to go to classes outside of work hours is because their family responsibilities are less demanding relative to those of the younger women at Stoney Creek and Brantford. While there does not seem to be a problem with scheduling, it might be worthwhile to survey the workers about their preferences for class times. This would be specially useful if other kinds of classes, for example more advanced classes, were to be considered for those whose English is above the levels of the present classes but who would like to learn more. We strongly urge that some arrangement be made to provide classes for the night shift at Brantford.

Structure of the Classes

At Stoney Creek, learners are admitted into the classes on a continuous intake basis; in other words, the teacher will take on new students at any time. This approach is demanding on the teacher since she must design her lessons so as to accommodate new students who have not covered the same material as the rest of the class. It also means that the size of the class fluctuates. In Brantford and Edmonton, classes are arranged into set sessions (seventeen weeks at Brantford and twelve to fourteen weeks at Edmonton). We suggest that the teacher at Stoney Creek might consider using sessions as well. The only real disadvantage to using session is that new workers who are eager to get into English class right away have to wait.

At both Stoney Creek and Brantford, there are two classes per shift. The teacher at Stoney Creek divides her students into more and less advanced so that she can focus her instruction better on the students' levels. The Brantford teacher does not divide the students according to level, but this may be because the students' English is mainly at the beginner level. In both plants, we suggest that consideration be given for special arrangement to be made for the teaching of those students who have low levels of education or who seem to lack confidence in their ability to learn. In Edmonton, the large enrolment permits two streams (one for those with low levels of education and the other for the more educated students), and each stream contains four levels. It is a great advantage to this program that Ms. Sauvé has a great deal of experience and training in working with learners with low levels of education. Thus, she can carefully and discretely screen in-coming students and place them appropriately. It appears that the teachers at the other two plants are not trained or experienced in this area.

Class sizes varied across the plants. The teacher at the Stoney Creek plant has little control over the size of the classes because of continuous intake. Our presence in that plant to do the study seemed to have raised awareness about and interest in the program, so the classes were expected to grow after we left. The classes at Brantford only have five students each. The teacher indicated that she could take more. Class sizes in Edmonton could theoretically be controlled because of the large size of the program. However, students who have been together for a long time appear to be unwilling to have their classes divided even when they get rather large. We feel that this situation poses no real problems. In general, several factors influence the issue of class size. The more homogenous the language levels and the higher the education level of the students, the larger the classes can be. However, for oral language learning the maximum class size, even for well matched, well educated students, is about twenty. Needless to say, the more heterogeneous and less experienced the students with formal education, the smaller the classes should be. It takes a very experienced and industrious teacher to handle a large, mixed class since multiple activities must be designed for individuals and small groups to work on at their own level. Of course, the size and furnishings of the classroom have some bearing on the optimal sizes of classes.

At Stoney Creek, the curriculum appeared to be largely structured on points of grammar and pronunciation although plant-related material was integrated into some lessons. At Brantford and Edmonton, the curricula involved both work and other related content and the teachers were prepared to modify lessons on the basis of topics or items of interest that students introduced in class. English language teaching inevitably involves content that is relevant to a number of different situations; therefore, the company should not be concerned that its interests are not being addressed when topics that do not relate directly to the workplace are taught. We were somewhat surprised that the materials developed by Jill Bell for Levi Strauss were not known to the teachers in Brantford and Stoney Creek. Evaluation of student progress formed an important part of the program in Edmonton. Such evaluation is valuable both for the students and for the company. We assume that the teacher at Brantford also reports of the students' progress. It is more challenging for the teacher at Stoney Creek to evaluate students' progress because of the continuous intake system.

While not all of the teachers at the Edmonton plant have formal teaching credentials, they have a well developed curriculum to work with and professional development support from English Language Professionals. Since the teachers in the other two plants work alone, it is important that they be well prepared to handle all aspects of teaching English in the workplace (appropriate teaching methods, curriculum development, negotiating course content with the company, screening and evaluation of students, and so on). It was our impression that the teacher at the Stoney Creek plant was not receiving much professional development support from her board of education.

How Learners are Remunerated

The question of compensation to workers for their time as well as their tuition was an issue at all plants, but for different reasons. At Stoney Creek there are a considerable number of new workers. Those who had not yet reached 100 per cent capacity in their operations were reluctant to attend the class, or felt that they were losing money by attending classes because their quarterly average (the rate of pay for the half hour they spend in class on company time) did not reflect their current productivity level. At Brantford, some supervisors expressed concern that the time taken for English language classes might affect the overall production of the plant and thus reduce the bonusses they receive based on the overall profits of the plant. In Edmonton, workers who attend class receive a stipend that does not affect the amount of money they make during the working day. The question was raised concerning the possibility that some workers were attending the classes just to receive the stipend. According to the evidence we gathered, this possibility seems highly unlikely. In all three plants, it was noted in interviews that immigrant workers are compensated for their time to receive training while other workers only receive tuition support if they choose to take courses in educational institutions outside of the plants.

Factors in All Plants

In the case of all plants, three factors are common. The most important and general factor is the need for the company to develop a policy on the purpose and nature of the content of the classes. Second, and closely related to the first, is the issue of the remuneration by the company to workers for ESL class time relative to other programs in the company that reimburse workers for tuition only if they take further training offered outside of the company. Third is the need for better communication between the ESL teacher(s) and supervisors for various reasons.

Summary

In sum, it is clear that several factors influence the current characteristics of the ESL classes at the three plants under study. The composition of the labourforce is a one factor. At Stoney Creek, the workers are newer and younger; in Edmonton, they are older and more likely to be cross-trained; in Brantford, there are more men and there seems to be some sensitivity on the part of Canadian born workers to the increasing role of immigrant workers in the plant. Second, supervisors have various degrees of power with respect to access to ESL classes: in Stoney Creek they help choose and encourage the workers to participate; in Brantford they act as gatekeepers; and in Edmonton they have no role at all. Third, the relationships of the English language teacher to the plants differ: in Stoney Creek there has been a succession of teachers supplied from educational institutions with little apparent support by those institutions for the teachers to adapt to the particular teaching circumstances; in Brantford, an independent teacher has been hired by the company with pay to develop curriculum but no external source of professional support; and in Edmonton the teaching is undertaken by a professional firm that works closely with the company and provides support to the teaching program by screening the participants to the program, developing the curriculum, conducting evaluations of student progress, and selecting and providing professional development for the teachers. Finally, the fact that the company has not articulated a policy on the purpose and nature of the content of the program has left various employees with disparate assessments and expectations about the program, its value, and its outcomes.

Findings of This Study in Light of Its Objective

As stated in the proposal by OISE for this study the focus would be on three kinds of factors: (a) those relating to workers' choices about taking part in the program; (b) those relating to the impact of the classes on participants; and (c) those relating to the impact of the classes on other stakeholders in the plant. Here we will review the data we collected in light of these focusses.

Workers' Choices about Taking Part in the Program

In terms of workers' choices about taking part in the ESL program, we perceive two influential factors. One is the means by which workers gain access to the program. This was discussed at some length earlier in this section. It seems that workers in some plants have virtually unrestricted access to the program while others can enrol only with their supervisors' permission. In each plant, human resources personnel, supervisors, and teachers play differing roles in informing workers about the classes, getting them into the classes, and allowing them to continue after they have studied for a period of time. The one group largely excluded from participation is workers in the wash section at Brantford although they have better opportunities than most of the other workers to learn English through communication on the job. Also, there is no class on the night shift at Brantford. Although those workers were invited to take part in the classes offered during the day or afternoon shifts, none has done so for reasons of the inconvenience of the time for them. We speculate that some men may be hesitant to take part in classes dominated by women and that supervisors might not like to study with their workers. In the latter case, too, it is clear that supervisors' English skills are usually well above those addressed in the classes.

The second factor we note here has to do with the confidence and experience of non-English speaking workers to take part successfully in an ESL classroom situation. As we noted in the introduction to this report, there are a number of factors such as range of personal experience before coming to Canada, difficult circumstances under which they left their home country, and level of formal education that are likely to have a strong influence on immigrant and refugee workers' preparedness to take part in regular ESL classes. These factors may result in some potential learners not having the confidence to take part in classes in the plant, in their dropping out of those classes, in their not learning much in those classes, or, alternatively, in their being frustrated that the classes are not challenging enough. In Stoney Creek and Brantford, supervisors make the decisions regarding access to ESL classes, and they are likely not to have much preparation to make decisions about such sensitive cases. In Edmonton, English Language Professionals not only do the screening of potential participants to the classes, but have also set up several streams in the classes they provide in order to meet the particular needs of participants. If teachers in Stoney Creek and Brantford were hired with specific skills in identifying learners with particular needs, and if they were in a position to make separate learning arrangements for participants with special needs, it is likely that all potential learners could be better accommodated in classes. When learners are placed in classes that suit their needs and circumstances, they can be expected to progress more quickly and successfully.

It should be noted that most of the participants in the Levis Strauss ESL classes we interviewed would not have taken an ESL class outside of the plant. Such factors as convenient hours and location, encouragement on the part of the employer, convenient transportation, familiarity of surroundings, and so on are important in their participation in ESL classes of any kind.

The Impact of the Classes on the Participants

The second focus we identified in our proposal concerned the impact of the classes on the participants. Our findings in this respect are highly positive. Virtually all the participants like the classes, think that they are learning language and other knowledge about life in Canada that are valuable to them, and enjoy the experience. They report that they can now communicate with store clerks, doctors, the company nurse, and bus drivers. One participant noted that she could now read more of company memos than the date. Supervisors mostly report an increase in participants' ability to express themselves and in their self-confidence; however, doubts were expressed about the progress being made by some participants. Some ESL class participants we interviewed explained their hopes for the classes in terms of their desire to be able to defend their ideas and positions in the workplace. Others indicated that the classes had been too hard or too elementary for them. The social networks developed in the classes, especially in Edmonton, seem to fill an important personal gap for many of the learners.

Language learning can be a lengthy process, especially for isolated women, working in jobs that make linguistic communication difficult, and with access to only three hours a week of language training. The ESL programs at Levi Strauss have been in place for a relatively short time, and not all participants have attended classes for very long. Thus, it is not surprising that the OISE team did not encounter dramatic stories about changes in the communications patterns among immigrant workers in the plants. We can say that the classes are probably a significant factor in recruitment and retention of workers. We are also of the view that the classes play a role in increasing the quality of communication in the workplace, although we cannot be precise about the kinds or amounts. We are certain that the classes play an important role in the morale of most participants and in the good perception of the company in the community.

Negative impacts of the ESL program for the participants concern the worry on the part of some of them, particularly in Stoney Creek, that they are losing money by taking part in the program. However, this concern was not a deterrant to many.

Impact of the Classes on Other Stakeholders in the Plant

With respect to impact of the classes on other stakeholders in the respective plants, supervisors seem to be the most affected. To a small extent in Stoney Creek and to a considerable extent in Brantford, supervisors reported that the program means more work for them in order to adjust their lines. Also, supervisors in these plants have added responsibilities in deciding who should go to class. In Stoney Creek, supervisors seemed enthusiastic about the anticipated and perceived benefits, while those at Brantford had a more difficult time balancing the benefits of sending workers to class with the immediate demands of work needing to be done. Supervisors in all three plants felt that they were not well connected with what was being taught in the classes.

Management was highly supportive of the program. One aspect of this support concerned the role of the classes in developing a more flexible workforce and, in particular, in promoting participation in independent work teams envisioned for the future.

Human resources personnel were also pleased for the same reasons as the managers as well as about generally better communications with the workers. One noted that more workers were phoning in to report that they would be absent rather than having a family member do it for them.

Supervisors, managers, and other employees raised the question of the fairness of the company's policy to pay immigrant workers for part of their time to take ESL, while other workers only received compensation for their tuition expenses if they took training courses.

Questions Developed by Plant Managers for This Study

We have analysed the questions developed by plant managers for this study (see Appendix) into three categories: (1) role of language, literacy, and ethnic issues in current plant conditions; (2) role of language, literacy, and ethnic issues in planned developments in staff relationships; and (3) issues specifically related to the English language classes. While we have not been able to address directly a number of the 33 questions outlined, we have developed insight into some of these issues. Some of the question were fitted into more than one category.

Role of Language, Literacy, and Ethnic Issues in Current Plant Conditions

Under the heading of the role of language, literacy, and ethnic issues in current plant conditions we identified eight questions. (1) **Why aren't ESL participants using their English--is it related to level of encouragement, acceptance?** We see various reasons for this. In addition to points made below about opportunities to speak English, one reason is the strong pattern of using other languages to communicate on the floor and in social situations. The larger the ethnic group in the plant the stronger these patterns tend to be. People who have a non-English language in common feel awkward speaking English with each other, and may be criticized by their peers for showing off or trying to complicate the communication. Another reason concerns people's levels of confidence, even if they have been taking classes. Certainly, encouragement and acceptance on the part of English speaking staff can and apparently does make a considerable difference here. We were under the impression that the fact that we were doing a study on the ESL program acted as a catalyst for some people, especially supervisors and instructors, to renew their efforts to encourage the use of English and to promote an accepting atmosphere in addition to raising awareness about the classes. Perhaps regular reminders in terms of special events, awards, and so on, would keep this momentum up. We caution, however, that pressure rather than encouragement for the immigrants to speak English could undermine the good will created by the provision of the ESL program.

(2) **What opportunities do we provide to use English?** The short answer to this is not very many. The nature of the work, noise in the plants, and the constitution of the labourforce makes it difficult to provide an English speaking environment from which workers can learn. We did not have the time to study the language learning effect of workteams, such as that in the wash area at Brantford, but expect that such working arrangements make a considerable difference regarding exposure to English and subsequent language learning. We would not encourage the company to apply pressure on non-English speaking employees to speak English either on the job or in social situations since they generally feel insecure enough about their abilities already. Gentle encouragement from supervisors, instructors, management, and all other English speaking employees, particularly on social topics, would be the best strategy to increase English language use.

(3) **To what extent do language and literacy levels impede promotional opportunities?** Clearly, language and literacy skills are increasingly demanded as employees move up the heirarchy in any of the plants. Those non-English speakers who have been promoted have developed their English skills well, although some have found the challenges difficult. For example, one supervisor said that it was difficult for her to get up the courage to use the public address system in the plant. We note that operators do not have to have any literacy skills except to read numbers and place gummed stickers on the right place on simple forms. If they want to monitor their progress or check on their pay, they must learn to read the production printouts and their payslips--again a matter of reading numbers. Supervisors' jobs also involve mostly reading numbers, although they have to make certain reports and are involved in written work in training exercises. Transfers to jobs in the office almost inevitably involve more literacy skills in English. While language skills in oral English can clearly be an impediment to promotion (an issue that the company may well want to address), we suggest that it is also worth considering the role that literacy skills in English plays in promotion of immigrant and Canadian born workers alike. A company that employs people who don't speak any English is also attractive to English speakers who have low literacy skills. The positions that the latter occupy in the workforce as a whole and at what levels in the company might be a useful study. We suggest that oral communications and specific literacy courses be offered to any employee who is interested in being promoted.

(4) **Do we give opportunities for job enhancement?** From our limited observations in the plants, it appears to us that job enhancements strategies are not having much impact on language learning in the plants. While the buddy system for new workers in Stoney Creek may have some language learning impact in some cases, and the multi-ethnic dinner creates considerable good will, most initiatives such as rap sessions, the company newletter, community programs, and the like seem not to attract the participation of the non-Canadian born workers. Certainly, hesitancy about their ability to express themselves adequately is an important factor in their reluctance to participate, but their lack of knowledge about the intent and consequences of their involvement in these

activities may also play a role.

(5) **What are we doing to maintain loyalty? Comment: the union does not seem to be supportive of immigrant employees.** We gained some information about the unions in our interviews and observations. They do not seem to provide translated documents in most instances except during negotiations. Union leaders have not pressed to have union related information included in the curriculum of the ESL classes. They have had a difficult time recruiting immigrant workers to take part in their activities and, despite their efforts, the local union representatives come from Canadian born employees. The cultural backgrounds of the immigrant workers probably give many of them particular attitudes to the role of unions. Also, as elsewhere, the language demands of participating in union activities may seem too much for others. On the other hand, if the unions were in some way perceived as a negative factor by immigrant workers, we would probably have heard about this, and we did not.

(6) **How is the culture of the plant changing as a result of the ethnic mix?** Because our study was a 'snapshot' in time of the plants rather than a longitudinal look at plant culture, we do not have much of a response. However, it appears that Edmonton has stabilized with a certain kind of ethnic mix, that Stoney Creek is experiencing staff changes that do not seem to be particularly disruptive, and that the mix between Canadian born and immigrants in Brantford may be a source of some tension. Since we have not had the opportunity to study the labourmarket in the communities in which these plants exist, we cannot offer an opinion about the effects of job competition among various groups. However, it is our view that the communications patterns in the plants, while a challenge, are not a primary source of tension.

(7) **What is the level of literacy among the immigrant population of the plants?** There are two questions here. One concerns the numbers of immigrant workers who are not literate in any language. Such people will probably have difficulty in learning in the ESL classes unless special provisions are made for them, as they are in the Edmonton plant. It is unlikely that they will ever develop sophisticated literacy skills in English unless they are very young. However, they can certainly be expected to learn practical English literacy skills if they get the right kind of support. For those immigrants who are literate in their first language, the chances that they will be able to transfer much of that basic skill to literacy in English are high. They are more likely to want to have the English classes include a fair amount of reading and writing as well as oral language development. Please understand that there is a continuum between those immigrant workers who have no literacy skills at all in any language and those who are highly literate in another language. Although we did not press our interviewees to talk about their level of literacy in other languages, it is our impression that there are a number of immigrant workers in each of the plants who have low and high levels of literacy skills in their first languages.

(8) **We tend to forget how women live at home. We may believe that women are equal to men, but 99% are controlled by their husbands. How does this affect their ability to speak out in class or to management?** Because most of the English classes are filled and taught entirely by women, we are not particularly concerned about gender constraints on women to speak out in class, although there are sometimes status problems that arise given participants' experience with the student/teacher relationship in their home countries. However, the question about women employees' attitudes to speaking up to management is one for the company to consider seriously, particularly given that many of the members of higher levels of management are males. We believe that this is a significant factor for women of certain cultures. Also, of course, anyone who feels insecure about his or her command of English will be hesitant about speaking up. This issue may relate closely to the answer to question (1) above.

Role of Language, Literacy, and Ethnic Issues in Planned Employee Development

We have grouped together seven questions that seemed to us to reflect managers' interests in future developments in the workforce. They are:

(1) **How can we move from tolerance to trust and respect (related to mission, vision and values training)?**

(2) **What is the effect of ESL on recruitment and retention?**

(3) **Relation of ESL to empowerment--skills such as problem solving, teamwork?**

(4) **Are we making the best use of ESL as a vehicle for internal communication?**

(5) **How can we make the work meaningful? What kinds of skills do we need to develop for self-managed work groups? Can ESL help?**

(6) **Many of the immigrants are extraordinary--look what they've been able to do--how can we tap into their talent and potential?**

(7) **What are our requirements for the future work force--for supervisors? What is the workplace going to look like three years down the road? The supervisor is the most important link between corporate vision and the employee.**

In our view, ESL, even viewed strictly as language skills training, is a critical factor in the company's plans to involve all employees in its mission, vision and values development, to elicit employees' views on production-related and structural problems, to create self-managed workgroups, to make best use of the talents of all employees, to promote the best people to the supervisory level, and so on. First, people who cannot express themselves well in the dominant language of the company cannot communicate their concerns and ideas and thus cannot contribute to the development of the company. Second, until all employees can express themselves in English, management is not in a good position to learn the extent of their talents. Third, fluency in oral and written English is a necessary condition for supervisory or higher positions in a company that expects to have self-managed work groups. Fourth, employees who do not understand

English well will have a great deal of difficulty in understanding the concepts about the culture of the company that management is trying to promote. Fifth, employee training in problem solving and new teamwork relationships will be hard to implement with workers who do not understand English well. As long as employees at the lowest levels work in essential isolation on one operation, then abstract, interpersonal communication is not needed. But if our understanding is correct about the company's vision to create work situations in which workers cooperate to make group decisions on a daily basis, then a strong common language base will be necessary. We do not see, and we assume that the company does not either, that the creation of work groups organized on the basis of a common language other than English as the lingua franca would be an acceptable alternative.

For immigrant workers who do not speak English (well), acquisition of English language skills per se is empowering because it gives them back the voice they had in their countries of origin to express their ideas, articulate their concerns, and understand what is going on around them. This empowerment is to the immigrants' and the company's benefit. We saw virtually no evidence that workers whose English language skills were enhanced by ESL classes were likely to leave the company or become disruptive.

The ESL classes can be empowering in other ways to the extent that other content than specific language skills is included in the curriculum. All language learning needs to involve a certain amount of cultural learning as well. Through the mediation of the teacher, the content of the ESL classes can be negotiated between the company and the learners with respect to what each group thinks is important. To a certain extent this is being done now, but this relationship could be much better developed in some plants. One can also look at this potential in another way and consider all relationships between English speaking and non-English speaking employees as an opportunity for language teaching and learning as well as communication on other topics. Again, this is being done now, to some extent, by some instructors, supervisors, and human resources personnel, but it could be extended much further.

In sum then, we see the development of the English language skills of immigrant workers as critical to future developments that the company is trying to promote. These skills are empowering to the immigrants themselves and to the company. ESL classes can be further enhanced in its capacity to teach workers about the culture of the plant as well as that of the community at large. Finally, English speaking employees in many positions can learn to understand their role, in communicating with immigrant workers, to include language teaching.

Issues Specifically Related to the English Language Classes

We understood the rest of the managers' questions to refer directly to the ESL classes. We have grouped them into five categories below.

The first group of questions relate to access or barriers to participation in ESL classes.

(1) **To what extent does prejudice interfere with participation in ESL?** In our study we were not in contact with the worksites for long, nor were we able to get comprehensive, in-depth data on complex issues such as ethnic relations. It does not appear to us that would-be learners are prevented or discouraged from taking part in the classes on the basis of negative factors from their peers. To the extent that supervisors control access to the classes, there might be a discriminatory element, but we only got hints of this and only at Brantford. Also, there may be certain interethnic relations factors that would influence an individual's willingness to join a particular class. Our data are not strong enough to allow us to draw definite conclusions about these questions. We can say that issues of this sort were not mentioned to us directly.

(2) **To what extent is the production-oriented focus of the plant having an impact on support for the program?** From the point of view of the participants in the classes, some workers in the Stoney Creek plant, usually those who were not yet working up to the 100 per cent level, felt that they were making less money by attending the classes paid at their quarterly average than if they had been working at their machines. Supervisors of Brantford said that they have to work harder to adjust their lines in order to release workers to go to class. Production problems were cited as so great in the wash area at Brantford that operators are never released to attend class. Also, supervisors at Brantford noted that the time taken by workers to attend class might affect the overall production of the plant and, in turn, the bonusses they receive. In Edmonton, classes are held outside of work hours, so the production factor is not an issue. On the positive side, management and some supervisors are optimistic about the outcomes of the program in terms of improved communications, which would presumably affect production levels in the long run.

(3) **Why do some people drop out or refuse to go?** Please see discussion in the introduction regarding factors that may affect immigrants' confidence in attempting formal language learning or their success in classes. Some find the classes too difficult and others too easy, based on the background they bring with them to class. Other factors such as fatigue, lack of available time, and priority on improving their skills on their machines may enter into the question.

(4) **We tend to forget how these women live at home. We may believe that women are equal to men, but 99% are controlled by their husbands. How does this affect their ability to speak out in class or to management?** As noted above, women participants are not likely to be inhibited about speaking out in class for gender reasons when the class and teacher are all female. On the other hand, male workers may be inhibited from

taking part in all female classes, and their presence in a class may affect the patterns of communication.

(5) **Some of our employees may have been being shot at just last year. How difficult is it to make major changes and adjustments for them? Do we expect too much, too soon?** Trauma over horrible experiences, guilt that they got out and others didn't, and worry about family and friends at home may dominate the attention of some refugees and immigrants for years. Specific counselling for such people is available in larger cities. Workers affected should be made aware of these services and treated sensitively in the plant.

The second group of questions refer to the basic structure of the classes themselves.

(1) **Would like to know some practical things like**
  - **is 3 hours a week sufficient?**
  - **is lunchtime the most appropriate time?**
  - **is the class size sufficient - should it be larger, smaller?**

(2) **What is the adequacy of the ESL training?**

The answer to these questions is 'it depends.' Three hours a week is not an insignificant amount of time, but its sufficiency depends on the goals and the urgency for the training. We suspect that the three hour program at Stoney Creek and Brantford was set up to balance the amount of time that could practically be taken from the production schedule with the fact that most of the workers would not be able to attend classes outside of work hours. It might be interesting to offer additional classes after work hours as well to see if some workers would take part, as in the Saturday and after hours classes in Edmonton. A survey of immigrant workers on this would be helpful. Similarly, lunchtime is the best time for those workers who could not attend class before or after work hours because of other responsibilities or transportation problems. It is also possible that some people attend classes during work hours unbeknownst to other family members who might disapprove of their learning English. With respect to class size, large classes (up to about twenty) are acceptable if the learners are fairly homogeneous and do not have special learning needs. If screening and streaming of learners into suitable classes can be conducted by a trained person, class sizes can be determined individually on the basis of learners' skills. However, numbers of learners in the program, flexibility of class times, and the numbers of sections possible influence the degree to which learners can be placed in optimal classes.

The next set of questions concern the teachers.

(1) **How important is the quality of the teacher, not just technically, but interpersonally? I think our best teachers are the ones who get involved--go on field trips--even dance together, and are able to tailor the program to the individuals.**

(2) Do we give enough feedback to the teachers? Do we get enough feedback from them?

We believe that the personal commitment of the teacher to the needs and interests of the learners is just as important as technical skills in ESL teaching. Our views on criteria for hiring teachers are influenced by the amount of support teachers have available to them in terms of understanding how to set up and manage a work-place language program and in terms of general ESL technical support. In other words, we would think it reasonable to hire teachers with no formal qualification in ESL if they were to be closely supervised by people with experience in English in the workplace and supported by specially designed ESL methods and materials. If such support is not available, then it is greatly preferable to hire someone with formal qualifications and suitable EWP experience. Not all educational institutions (school boards or community colleges) have people on staff who could provide the necessary support or programs of professional development for teachers placed in workplace settings. An important aspect of good EWP teaching is initial and maintained contact with relevant staff members in the workplace. In all three plants, the need was expressed for more contact between the teachers and the supervisors. We would encourage such contact because both groups stand to gain a great deal. Supervisors can tell teachers about the kinds of language needs that should be addressed and report on the progress of individual learners outside of class. In return, the teachers can help the supervisors with ways in which they can support the learning that is going on in class and can explain aspects of the performance of individual learners to the supervisors.

The following set of questions are about the content and scope of the program.

(1) At what point do we consider someone "Graduated?"

(2) Should we continue reimbursing or paying half the time of training--are there alternatives to that? Is this on-the-job training or personal development?

(3) We need to look at the relationship between what language is needed and is useful and what is taught. One of the reasons our employees wouldn't go to night school (in the community) was that the language they learned wasn't relevant to their day to day life.

(4) How do we evaluate students' progress. How do we decide when they go to another level? Do we have multi-levels in all our programs?

We noted in the introduction that the company does not have a firm policy on the program and that the program seems to be in a pilot or experimental stage. The answers to the questions above can only be found through the development of policy on the role and purpose of the program and the extent of the company's need and responsibility for supporting it. Some of the relevant issues were discussed above under the role of language, literacy, and ethnic issues in planned employee development. We would like to emphasize here that there is very little difference between on-the-job ESL training for real empowerment in the workplace and ESL for personal development. The language skills are virtually the same and the content diverges only a little. It is also important to note that since individuals come to language training with differing characteristics, skills, and experience, they will progress through the training at varying speeds. To be more specific about the current program, Edmonton has two streams and four levels within each stream. Students are formally evaluated regularly there. In the Brantford plant, the teaching is structured into sessions several months long, presumably with evaluation at some points along the way. In Stoney Creek, two levels are offered but the teacher permits continuous intake of learners, making it difficult to make group evaluations.

Questions were also raised concerning the relationship between the program in the plants and resources for language training in the community.

(1) **What community options are available to back up/extend ESL training?**
(2) **How well do we communicate benfits such as tuition reimbursements?**
(3) **Do we effectively utilize outside training resources?**
(4) **Should we continue reimbursing or paying half the time of training--are there alternatives to that? Is this on-the-job training or personal development?**

Clearly, there must be some rationale to distinguish the support provided for the ESL program for immigrant workers and the tuition reimbursement benefit offered to all employees. The ESL program is costly to the company and English speaking employees have the right to think that the immigrants are receiving special treatment. A policy on the content and scope of the ESL program would help to resolve this issue. The cut-off point suggested by the English Language Professionals in Edmonton was when the learner could participate in outside training at the level of grade ten English. We note from our data that most immigrant workers would not participate in programs outside of the plant because of time pressures and probably their lack of knowledge of what is available. Most current participants in the program in Edmonton said that they would continue to take part even if the stipends were removed. However, we suspect that participants in Stoney Creek and Brantford would be more likely to drop out if paid release time during work hours were not available. There are a number of ways in which training resources in the community could be tapped, regardless of the status of the ESL program in the plants. For example, settlement workers could be brought in to inform workers about facilities and services available that might be of interest to them. Immigrant workers with low levels of literacy in their first language might be supplied with tutors from local community agencies serving immigrants. For that matter, tutors might be made available for upgrading of any workers whose literacy skills are such that they do not have access to regular training programs in educational institutions. The Hamilton area is well served by a coalition of agencies aimed at meeting the educational needs of a wide variety of learners.

The final question to be addressed is **What's next from the participants' point of**

view? We were not surprised that the data we got from participants about suggested changes to the program were not at all specific. Most of those who did not find the program too hard or too easy like the program as it is. Some at each plant asked for more reading and writing. We suggest that the learners' enthusiasm for the program be taken as genuine. We further suggest that, once policy for the program comes under consideration by the company, that a variety of options be developed for the relevant workers to discuss. If they felt confident about the alternatives that the company would be prepared to provide, we feel certain that they would be specific about their preferences.

Implications for Future Action

As may have been expected from the discussion above, our main suggestion is that the company develop a policy on ESL training in its relevant plants. There was lack of clarity and some conflicting views about the purpose of the program on the part of many employees. The most important consideration is the purpose of the program in light of the needs and principles of the company. Is ESL provided for altruistic reasons, to promote equity in the labourforce and/or the community, or is it there to improve productivity? None of these alternative views are mutually exclusive and might all be met through similar initiatives. However, many of the questions raised by managers or through our data can only be responded to once the purpose of the program is decided on. For example we would assume that such a policy would clarify questions such as: the disparity in company support between the paid time for ESL learners compared with tuition only support for other workers who take courses; when could an ESL learner be considered to have graduated; which workers should be excused from production duties for language training; or what the content of the classes should focus on.

If the company decided that its motives for providing the classes were entirely **altruistic**, then the content of the classes would be entirely learner centred, in other words, based on what the participants wanted to learn. The learners might have a strong say in choosing the teacher, although they might want help in identifying candidates. The company might prefer to move all classes to outside of working hours and remove all compensation for the time spent in class. If the company motives for the class were to assist immigrant employees to participate in the life of the plant on an **equal footing** with Canadian born employees, then the objectives for the curriculum would be long-range, involving a number of levels, some of which fairly fluent operators, supervisors, office workers (including some English speaking employees), might want to take part in. The content of the classes would have to be considerably learner centred and would include teaching employees how to stand up for their rights and opinions in a variety of circumstances. Rather than being seen as an entirely ESL program for immigrant workers, it might be conceived as a series of courses starting from ESL and literacy for workers who are not literate in their mother tongue and do not speak English up to courses in memo writing, office procedures, and minute taking for employees wishing to be promoted from lower to middle management. The line between ESL classes, in which workers are compensated for their time, and other training, in which workers are compensated for their tuition only, would have to be reconsidered. Finally, if **productivity** were the main focus of the program, then decisions would have to be made about the extent to which worker participation in various aspects of the activities of the plants is relevant to actual productivity. At the present time, if productivity were the only motivation for the ESL program for non-salaried employees, it would logically have to be discontinued since virtually all operators do not need to speak or write English to do their jobs. However, if the company believes in its values for teamwork, the promotion of workers from the lower levels, and a positive company culture, then it is critical that immigrant workers learn enough English to take an active part in comunication. This means not only understanding what is said to them but also expressing their views with confidence. The achievement of this goal is a long-range one, involving various levels and including training in relatively advanced literacy as well as oral language skills. In a productivity oriented program, the company would have considerable say in the content of classes and the kinds of classes offered, depending on company assessed needs for employees with specific skills in various facets of the operation. As noted above, the choice among altruism, equality, and productivity does not necessarily result in programs that are much different in quality or quantity. We expect that the company will want to develop a policy that will combine aspects of all three of these principles. Critically, the company must decide where it stands, delineate the practical implications, and make those known to all employees. We also expect that the implementation of the policy may be different in the various plants.

We include other suggestions for more specific and shorter-term action. It seems to be a need in all the plants that there be better communication established between the teachers and the supervisors. It would be productive if teachers were regularly invited to a variety of plant meetings and functions. In addition, the profile of the ESL program could be raised through articles in the company newsletter, bulletin board displays, and the like. In Brantford and Stoney Creek, it would be helpful if one person, either the human resources manager or the ESL teacher, were identified as specifically responsible for the ESL program so that matters such as the promotion of the program in the plant and liaison between teachers and supervisors were monitored regularly. Consideration might be given to the qualifications of and professional support available to the teacher in Stoney Creek and perhaps in Brantford. In addition to having suitable ESL training and knowledge of how to set up and run an EWP program, teachers must be able to assess learners' needs. At least in Stoney Creek, we expect that there are workers with special needs who would do well in ESL if they were placed in a learning situation that suited their characteristics. In this and other regards, the company might receive support from various community agencies that specialize in immigrant settlement and literacy training. For those workers whose oral English is good and who would be interested in being promoted, the company might offer short voluntary classes in skills such as note taking, report writing, record keeping, and so on. It is expected that such courses would be useful for other employees, fluent in English, who have not had much experience with specific uses of English literacy or certain kinds of business procedures. Finally, we suggest that possibilities for setting up an ESL class for the night shift at Brantford be explored.

These suggestions are not an exhaustive list and we welcome the company's comments on it or other aspects of the analysis. The OISE team would like to express its thanks to Levi Strauss for involving us in a most interesting study. If there are questions regarding our data, analysis, or suggestions, we would be pleased to discuss these matters with you.

APPENDIX

"What kind of information would be helpful to you in the evaluation for improvement of your ESL program?"

- Why aren't ESL participants using their English - is it related to level of encouragement, acceptance?
- What opportunities do we provide to use English?
- How can we move from tolerance to trust and respect (related to mission, vision and values training)?
- What in the level of promotional opportunities - to what extent do language and literacy impede?
- What community options are available to back up/extend ESL training?
- To what extent is the production-oriented focus of the plant having an impact on support for the program?
- At what point do we consider someone "Graduated?"
- Do we give opportunities for job enhancement?
- What is the effect of ESL on recruitment and retention?
- Relation of ESL to empowerment-skills such as problem solving, teamwork?
- To what extent does prejudice interfere with participation in ESL?
- Are we making the best use of ESL as a vehicle for internal communication?
- How can we make the work meaningful? What kind of skills do we need to develop for self-managed work groups? Can ESL help?
- Many of the immigrants are extraordinary - look what they've been able to do - how can we tap into their talent and potential?
- What's next from participants' point of view?
- Why don't more people apply for promotions?
- How well do we communicate benefits such as tuition reimbursements?

- Do we effectively utilize outside training resources?

- What is the adequacy of the ESL training?

- What are we doing to maintain loyalty? Comment: the union does not seem to be supportive of immigrant employees.

- What are our requirements for the future work force - for supervisors'? What is the workplace going to look like three years down the road? The supervisor is the most important link between corporate vision and employee.

- What is the level of literacy among the immigrant population in the plant?

- How is the culture of the plant changing as a result of the ethnic mix?

- Suggestion: consultants should talk to successful students.

- Would like to know some practical things like
    - is 3 hours a week sufficient?
    - is lunchtime the most appropriate time?
    - is the class size sufficient - should it be larger, smaller?

- Why do some people drop out, or refuse to go?

- Should we continue reimbursing or paying half the time of training - are there alternatives to that? Is this on-the-job training or personal development?

- Do we give enough feedback to teachers? Do we get feedback from teachers?

- We need to look at the relationship between what language is needed and is useful and what is taught. One of the reasons our employees wouldn't go to night school (in the community) was that the language they learned wasn't relevant to their day to day life.

- How important is the quality of the teachers, not just technically, but inter-personally? I think our best teachers are the ones who get involved - go on field trips - even dance together, and are able to tailor the program to the individuals.

- We tend to forget how these women live at home. We may believe that women are equal to men, but 99% are controlled by their husbands. How does this affect their ability to speak out in class or to management?

- Some of our employees may have been being shot at just last year. How difficult is it to make such major changes and adjustments for them? Do we expect too much, too soon?

- How do we evaluate the students' progress. How do we decide when they go to another level? Do we have multi-levels in all our programs?

December 14, 1989